



## FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



### FYN Topic: Royal Poinciana needs Plenty of Room

**Question:** I have two Royal Poinciana's trees in my yard. They are about 7-8 years. All the grass has died beneath them. Is this due to a lack of sun or do their roots excrete something into the soil to prevent other plants from growing. Rita Lou, Bonita Springs

**Answer:** Royal Poinciana, *Delonix regia*, is without a doubt one of the most popular flowering trees in South Florida. Its long bloom season is from late April thru September. A mature Royal Poinciana has broad, low branches emerging from a large trunk. Its distinctive, umbrella-like tree shape and branches grow 60 feet wide while growing only 40 feet high. This fast growing tropical tree grows 5 feet each year providing instant deep shade within 4-6 years causing most lawn grasses to thin out under its canopy.

The Poinciana needs plenty of room to grow. Its shallow roots easily lift driveways and sidewalks when planted 10-15 feet away and prevent most understory plants including lawn grass from getting enough water and nutrients to survive. University of Florida Horticulture professor Dr. Bijan Dehgan has reported the trees may have a natural antagonism growing in the same place. However, the theory right now is the tree's fallen leaves excrete a natural toxin or herbicide inhibiting the growth of grass rather than the roots secreting the toxin. However, not enough credible evidence or research has been done to say for sure.

### Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>  
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>  
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>  
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>  
<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>



Distinctive, umbrella-like tree shape and branches grow 60 feet wide while growing only 40 feet high.

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing [Extgardener@leegov.com](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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