

Caesalpinia pulcherrima

Dwarf Poinciana, Barbados Fence Post, Pride of Barbados

Fabaceae

Flower Display: A



Davie, Florida

Late June



Leu's Garden, Orlando, Florida Early September

Dwarf Poinciana

Syn: *Poinciana pulcherrima*

Origin: Central America, Caribbean

Zone: 9a-12b, 21°F minimum

Growth Rate: Fast

Flowering Months: April-January

Flowering Days:

Leaf Persistence: Semi-deciduous or Deciduous

Messiness: Medium

Salt Tolerance: Medium

Drought Tolerance: High

Nutritional Requirements: Low

Major Problems: None

Typical Dimensions: 10' x 10'

Uses: Container, Garden, Screen, Specimen

From spring to early winter, *Caesalpinia pulcherrima* is capable of being a vibrant treelet with abundant flowers of various hues. In Florida, however, unless pruned in the fall, the months from December into March are not kind to most *C. pulcherrima*. During those months, many treelets look more dead than alive. They have few or no leaves, dangling seedpods, and consequently an unkempt appearance. To avoid winter's messy look, to encourage new growth, and continuous spring to winter flowering, prune only 18 to 24 inches off each branch in early to mid fall. This amount is just enough to remove the old inflorescences, flowering or not, and a few inches of green stems. Light pruning in this manner can also be done after flowering in December. Incorrect or severe pruning, especially in the spring, could delay flowering until September, meaning four to five months of flowering loss when compared to a modest fall pruning. Prune *C. pulcherrima* no more than once a year. It grows quickly before flowering, but while flowering, growth virtually stops, and so pruning is not needed. Maximum height is about 15 feet tall. Despite its shagginess in winter, *C. pulcherrima* makes an excellent small flowering tree. It forms a naturally thin-flat top that is densely covered with a copious amount of long, erect, terminal inflorescence. The slightly fragrant florets are all yellow or red, a combination of both colors, or in shades of pink. Each floret has 10 long, protruding stamens. As the inflorescence elongates, it produces new florets at the top 1/3, and promptly sheds the lower, old florets, including the petiole. The pods form quickly at the bottom of the inflorescence, and the flower buds open a

few at a time, so that buds, florets, and seed pods appear simultaneously. *C. pulcherrima* will tolerate acid to alkaline soils. Fertilizer application is hardly necessary, especially if it is grown in adequately mulched soils. It makes a beautiful informal row of small trees, each tree often with several trunks. Grow it also as an informal hedge or as a specimen tree, but in close proximity to other foliage to hide its potentially untidy winter appearance. *C. pulcherrima* comes with or without spines, so get to know your treelet. It is easily propagated from seeds or from cuttings.



Fort Myers, Florida Mid October



Edison & Ford Winter Estates, Fort Myers
Late August



St. Lucia, Eastern Caribbean Mid October



Fort Myers, Florida Late September



Fort Myers, Florida Mid July

Leaves: Even-bipinnate, alternate, to 24 inches long, with 4-9 pairs of even pinnae, 5-12 pairs of oblong to obovate leaflets

Flowers: Caesalpinaceous, yellow, red or pink, with 10 long thread-like stamens, on terminal racemes to 22 inches long

Fruits: Pods, flatten, to 5 inches long with 5-8 shiny brown, flat seeds

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