Strelitzia nicolai
White Bird-of-Paradise

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INTRODUCTION

White Bird-of-Paradise is most often planted for its large, banana-like leaves and upright, clumping stalks which give an exotic feel to the landscape (Fig. 1). Plants can reach 20 to 30 feet in height with a spread of 10 feet though they are often seen much smaller. The five to eight-foot-long, cold-tender leaves are arranged in a fanlike display from the erect trunks and appear much like Traveler’s-Tree. The lower trunk becomes clear of leaves and exposed as the older leaves drop off. Leaves rip along the veins as they are blown by strong winds.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Scientific name: Strelitzia nicolai
Pronunciation: streh-LIT-see-uh NICK-oh-lye
Common name(s): White Bird-of-Paradise, Giant Bird-of-Paradise
Family: Strelitziaceae
USDA hardiness zones: 9B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; near a deck or patio; specimen; no proven urban tolerance
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

DESCRIPTION

Height: 20 to 30 feet
Spread: 6 to 10 feet
Crown uniformity: irregular outline or silhouette
Crown shape: palm; upright

Figure 1. Middle-aged White Bird-of-Paradise.
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower
Flower color: white
Flower characteristics: showy; year round flowering

Fruit
Fruit covering: dry or hard
Fruit color: brown
Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; inconspicuous and not showy; fruit, twigs, or foliage cause significant litter

Trunk and Branches
Trunk/bark/branches: routinely grown with, or trainable to be grown with, multiple trunks; grow mostly upright and will not droop; showy trunk; no thorns
Pruning requirement: needs little pruning to develop a strong structure
Breakage: resistant
Crown shaft: no

Culture
Light requirement: tree grows in part shade/part sun; tree grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: clay; loam; sand; slightly alkaline; acidic; well-drained
Drought tolerance: moderate
Aerosol salt tolerance: low
Soil salt tolerance: poor

Other
Roots: surface roots are usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding tree: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: little, if any, potential at this time
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

USE AND MANAGEMENT
The interesting flowers are white with a dark blue tongue. White Bird-of-Paradise is ideal for entranceways for a dramatic effect or for use at poolside. Plants are not messy but ragged leaves should be periodically removed for a tidy appearance.
This is a large plant and should be situated accordingly.

White Bird-of-Paradise grows well in full sun to light shade on moist, well-drained soil. Plants should be protected from high winds to minimize torn, ragged leaves. It will survive periods of 28-degrees F. with minimal leaf burn and will quickly recover. Prune to remove dead leaves and thin out surplus growth sprouting from the base of the trunk, if you wish.

Propagation is by division of the suckers or from seed which germinate slowly.

**Pests**

Scales may infest this tree.

**Diseases**

No diseases are of major concern.