

Dwarf Poinciana, Pride of Barbados, hmar, zahrat al tawose

GENERAL	
Origin	: sub-tropical, tropical
Vigour	: fairly fast growing
Humidity	: semi-arid, semi-humid, very humid
Propagation	: sowing and pricking out, cuttings
Maintenance	: low
CONDITIONS	
Urban climate	: resistant
Dessication	: vulnerable
Stagnant water	: vulnerable
Irrigation	: high
Salinity/ppm	: very high (5500 ppm)
Hardiness	: -6°C
SHAPE	
Type	: shrub
Height	: 3 m
Spread	: 3 m
Foliage	: semi-evergreen
FLOWER	
Colour	: red, orange, yellow
Size	: 3 cm - 4 cm
Period	: June - September
FRUIT	
Type of fruit	: pod
Fruit size	: 10 cm - 12 cm
Toxicity	: poisonous

This Mexican native makes a more lush impact than its yellow relative, *Caesalpinia gilliesii*. Its relation to the flamboyant tree is obvious and indicated by its synonym, *Poinciana pulcherrima*. The shrubs may become tree-like in their native region, but in Arriyadh they remain vase-shaped shrubs to about 2 metres high. Only a few bushes produce such a display of bright-red flowers in the hottest summer. Panicles of exotic inflorescences make the Pride of Barbados, or zahrat al tawose in Arabic, conspicuous over a long period. Brown, hard pods contain poisonous seeds that easily germinate when scarified. Most result in red, or sometimes in orange flowers. Yellow varieties such as ‘Phoenix’ also appear occasionally. The foliage is feathery. Protected locations allow leaves to last throughout the winter, but they usually turn red before they fall. This bush is tolerant of various soil conditions and even survives drought, but heavy soils may lead to chlorosis. Frequent irrigation is welcome during the growth season, but supplemental watering in winter should be avoided. Light frosts are tolerated. Unsightly growth may be cut to the ground, when ammonium sulphate is applied in spring to ensure quick recovery. In most cases, hard pruning still allows flowering within the same year, and makes for a more compact shape. The Pride of Barbados makes an ideal plant for both gardens and parks with a floral splendour that attracts from near and far. It is striking as a specimen grown in a container next to a seating area.

