

Emerald Goddess Gardens

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Botanical Name	Spathodea campanulata
Common Name	African Tulip, Fountain Tree, Flame of the Forest
Plant Family	Bignoniaceae
Mature Size	20 ft x 20 ft
Bloom Color	Orange
Bloom Period	Winter
Bloom Form	Tulip/Orchid Shape
Water	Moderate until well established
Light	Best in full sun
USDA Zone	10, 11 (9 with cold protection)
Fragrance	No
Uses	Specimen, wildlife habitat
Special Features	Fast growing, fire resistant, salt tolerant



This is another of those trees that, when spotted in bloom on a trip through the tropics, will make you go ...ohhhh....I want one!

African Tulips are native to Equatorial Africa, where they will frequently reach heights of 40' to 60' tall and develop canopies equally as large. However, outside of their native habitat, heights of around 20' to 30' are more standard. The bark is used in some African cultures for medicinal purposes.

In the winter, the large evergreen canopy of the African Tulip tree is covered with bright vibrant orange bell shaped flowers, that turn skyward.

The bright orange flowers are as large as your doubled fists and attract hummingbirds and other wildlife. Water, nectar, and insects will collect inside the large ampule shaped blooms, making the tree a favored bird hangout. Children have been known to use the flowers like water guns.

This beautiful tree has recently been rediscovered by Southern xeriscape (landscape with low water demands) designers, as it is actually quite drought tolerant once established.

It also is very hard to burn, and so has found a new advantage in suburban landscapes as a natural firebreak in some wildfire prone areas. This tree should be planted in a large, open space away from buildings as the wood is soft and the limbs can be broken off in high winds. It is considered somewhat salt tolerant, but will not withstand direct salt spray at oceanside. African Tulip is a fast growing tree and is quick to establish and can be expected to gain several feet each year.

It is tropical and is unlikely to withstand winter cold north of Zone 9. Mature Trees can survive brief dips below freezing, but young trees must be protected from freeze and frost.

It puts on seed born in long brown pods. The seed have tiny wings that carry them on the wind when the pod breaks open.

Direct planting of 4 inch starter sized plants is not recommended. For the best results with your new tree, repot it into an 8 inch to 10 inch pot with good drainage holes and allow it to grow large and fill the new pot with roots before setting it out into a tropical landscape.

When your new African Tulip Tree has grown large enough to plant:

- Plant it in fertile, well composted, well draining soil
- Locate in the full sun in a large open area
- Consider future size, and avoid planting too close to structures
- Supply supplemental irrigation until well established
- Feed a good quality slow release plant food in the Spring
- Naturally branching, so little pruning is needed. Prune for shape in the Spring.
- Protect from frost and freeze until very well established

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If you don't know your USDA Planting Zone, you can check the map on our website site at emeraldgoddessgardens.com

Care of Your Tree Starter

Here are a few basic guidelines for handling and caring for your new young tree.

Direct planting of 4 inch starter size plants or plugs directly into the landscape is not recommended, with a few exceptions. So, for the best results with your new plant we suggest that it be re-potted into a larger pot and allowed to grow larger until the new pot is filled with roots before setting out.

Check the recommended USDA Zone Range for the plant. Many gardeners are able to successfully grow plants outside their recommended Zones, but this is dependent upon providing the type of environment and care the plant needs.

- Immediately re-pot the new plant into a 6 inch to 10 inch diameter pot (a 6 inch pot is the recommended size for starter plugs) that can drain easily and thoroughly.
- Use a good quality commercial potting media.
- Apply a high quality, slow release plant food according to the label directions. Do not use hot, all chemical fertilizers like 6-6-6 or 10-10-10.
- Locate so that the plant can receive direct, full spectrum light for several hours daily, but is protected from hot, direct afternoon sun.
- Maintain consistent and uniform moisture in the soil. Take care not to over or under water.
- Packing crystals may be reused to conserve water, but do so with caution as they hold 6000 times their weight in water.
- If reusing the crystals, mix and incorporate them thoroughly throughout the potting media.
- Be sure the pot can drain and that the bottom of the pot does not sit submerged in water for more than a few hours.
- Supplement feed with a water soluble plant food every 2-3 weeks according to the label directions.
- Prune growth away from the bottom $\frac{1}{4}$ of the central trunk when the plant is young and actively growing to strengthen the central stalk.
- When the tree reaches about 4 to 5 feet in height then begin to prune and develop the canopy.
- Monitor for signs of disease or insects and treat accordingly.
- Protect from frost and freeze, as even cold tolerant plants can be damaged by cold, and tropicals will perform better, flower earlier, and live longer within their Zone Range when protected from cold temperatures.

Trees can be wintered over indoors when they are young and becoming established with the proper set up, ie, consistent warm temperature, attention to irrigation, sufficient light and prompt and proper treatments for any pest or disease issues that develop.

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