

Bell County Master Gardener
Tip of the Week
By Mary Lew Quesinberry
Caesalpinia, Bird of Paradise

Add some paradise to your garden by planting a member of the Caesalpinia family. There are at least sixteen species of these low Maintenance beauties. Drought tolerant, they are suitable for xeriscaping. They are deer resistant and these Birds of Paradise attract birds, butterflies and bees. Members of the Caesalpinia family require at least 6 hours of sun daily. They do best planted with a gritty soil mix and slightly elevated to ensure good drainage. They are also maintenance free and add an exotic look to the garden.

Three species of Caesalpinia do well in Central Texas. Pride of Barbados or Red Bird of Paradise, (*Caesalpinia pulcherrima*) is the most showy with red and yellow flowers. Water occasionally. It may freeze back to the ground, but will reappear when warm weather returns. It makes a vibrant specimen plant or you could use multiple plants to make a flamboyant screen.

Yellow Bird of Paradise or Desert Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia gillesti*) is native to Argentina. It is semi-deciduous in Bell County.

It has yellow flowers with red stamens. Its tiny leaves make it an arid-looking plant.

Mexican Bird of Paradise (*Caesalpinia mexicana*), is native to Texas and Mexico. It is fast growing and can grow to twenty feet in height! This beauty has yellow flowers and makes a beautiful translucent pea pod that is very decorative.

It has exotic green leaves that create an airy shade and it needs less water than the Red Bird of Paradise or the Yellow Bird of Paradise.

Any one of these easy to grow plants will glow in your garden! Try them, you won't be disappointed. Have any questions about gardening in Central Texas? Contact ask.bcmga@gmail.com

In the photos:

The flamboyant Red Bird of Paradise or Pride of Barbados makes a show stopping specimen plant. The Yellow Bird of Paradise has yellow flowers with red stamens and is an arid looking plant. The Mexican bird of Paradise has pleasant green leaves and yellow flowers. It is fast growing and the most drought tolerant of the Caesalpinias.

