

SPECIALITY FLOWER CROPS

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Speciality flower crops are minor or lesser-known cut flower crops with high prospects but grown on a small scale to satisfy the market demands. Speciality flower crops mostly belong to the following genera.

- Heliconias
- Alpinias (Shell gingers)
- Costus (Spiralgingers)
- Etlingeras (Torch gingers)
- Hedychiums (Butterfly gingers)
- Hitchenias (Praying mantle gingers)
- Kaempferias (Peacock gingers)
- Curcumas (Hidden or Surprise gingers)
- Boesenbergias
- Globbas (Dancing ladies)
- Zingiber (Edible gingers)

***HELICONIA* - FALSE BIRD-OF PARADISE, PARROT FLOWER**

Heliconia belongs to the family Heliconiaceae, which is a member of a larger taxonomic category called the order Zingiberales. Heliconias are native to South and Central America. They are popular as ornamental plants and cut flowers because of their brilliant colours and exotic appearance. Their enhancing beauty has made them, a best landscape plant. They exhibit a wide array of colours led by red, pink, orange, yellow, green combined with different sizes and shapes. Due to its exotic appearance and brilliant colours, it fetches premium price in the market. Leaves of some varieties of heliconia are also sold as cut foliage for flower decoration. *H. psittacorum* and some of its hybrids (e.g. 'Golden Torch') are particularly promising because of their attractive flowers, long straight clean peduncles, prolific year-round flower production, excellent postharvest characteristics, and few pest problems. The inflorescences can be used in a manner similar to those of bird of paradise, but they are less massive and are therefore, easily incorporated into smaller floral arrangements. In India, West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Assam and other North Eastern states are the major producers of Heliconia.

TAXONOMY

Heliconias are the only genus in the Heliconiaceae family. The genus has about 200 to 250 species and many cultivars. Many species show potential as commercial cut flower crops.