

Description

Red hot poker plants are truly aptly named with their orange, red and yellow flower spikes that look like blazing torches. These South African natives are popular ornamental perennials which crave sun and attract butterflies while being deer resistant. Red hot poker plants are easy to grow in well-draining soil.

Red Hot Poker Information

The striking red hot poker plant (*Kniphofia uvaria*) is in the Liliaceae family and is also known as poker plant and torch lily. This plant thrives in USDA zones 5 through 9 and is an upright evergreen perennial with a clumping habit. Over 70 known species exist of this South African native plant.

Torch lilies grow to be up to 5 feet tall and attract hummingbirds, butterflies and birds to the garden with their bright flowers and sweet nectar. Attractive sword-shaped leaves surround the base of a tall stem upon which red, yellow or orange tubular flowers droop down like a torch.

Planting Seeds

Torch lily seeds will require full sun, well-draining soil and plenty of organic matter.

Sow seeds indoors 6 to 8 weeks before planting out. Use a good potting mixture in pots which are several inches deep to preserve the taproot. Sow 3 seeds in each container and lightly dust with soil.

Keep the containers where temperatures are 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit (21-23 C.) and evenly moist. Expect germination in 21 to 28 days.

In warm regions, you can also direct sow the seeds in prepared garden beds. When plants are small clumps several inches wide, transplant them to the flower bed after hardening them off.

Care for Seeds

With a little luck and good care, red hot poker seed propagation should be successful and you will have some mini-me torch lilies in pots. It isn't a good idea to continue to grow the plants in containers since they have a fairly long taproot.

Moving them to a garden space with full sun and porous soil is the best way to grow red hot pokers. Expose indoor grown plants gradually to outside conditions over the course of a week to help them adjust and avoid shock. Set the plants into the soil at the same level at which they were growing in the containers. If you get them in the ground early enough, you should expect a bloom the first year.

Remove spent flower spikes as they occur and cut the foliage back in late winter to early spring to allow new leaves room to grow. Provide mulch over the root zone in northern climates to protect the plant from cold.

Divide your pokers every few years