

Plant Materials Information

1. gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*)
2. fire bush (*Hamelia patens*)
3. royal poinciana (*Delonix regia*)
4. thatch palm (*Thrinax radiata*)

Conservation message

The fire bush (*Hamelia patens*) contains red flowers which is best for the bird and butterfly in the Keys.

500-word Rationale for Plant Selections

Hi I'm Luis, and the BGCI / Fairchild Challenge Global Competition included our school, Key Largo School in their competition. We included three or more plants in our wreath, each student went into groups to make their wreaths. Obviously, I made one myself with my group and I included 4 plants in it. I included the thatch palm, royal poinciana, fire bush, and the gumbo limbo. Hopefully with lots of luck, you enjoy my wreath!

The gumbo limbo is native here in the Keys. Its trunk is strong enough to build hammocks between the 2 trunks. Its scientific name is *Bursera simaruba*. This wild growing tree can reach up to 64 feet in South Florida and is one of the fastest growing trees in the Keys. Interesting enough, the Calusa Indians and a few others use the sticky bark of the tree to trap song birds to eat or to trade. Also since this plant has been used by the natives here, it is protected by the State of Florida and cannot be cut down or interfered in any way unless you have permit saying otherwise.

Another plant that I used in my wreath is the fire bush. It is also another wild plant that serves a purpose here in the Keys. The large shrub contains red flowers which is best for the bird and butterfly in the Keys. Its red or orange flowers need the full light of the sun or else it withers and dies. It doesn't really need much water and it usually reaches between 10 and 12 feet in height and width. The scientific name for it is the *Hamelia patens*. It is also one of the fastest growing plants here in the Keys.

The royal poinciana is not a native plant here in South Florida but it is widely growing and found everywhere. It is native in Madagascar, but it is a popular plant found almost everywhere here in the Keys. It is called the royal poinciana because of its elegant looking flowers. It can reach up to 40 feet and it needs all the sun it can get. Its scientific name is *Delonix regia*. It is another fast growing plant in the Keys and doesn't need much water. Plus, it is a great source of shade in the sunny days here in the Keys.

The last plant that is used in my wreath is the thatch palm. Again, it is not a native plant here in the Keys but is widely cultivated and it is found in a lot of places just like the royal poinciana. Its scientific name is the *Thrinax radiata*. This tree can also support a hammock if you choose. It grows very slow and can reach up to 20 feet at its height. It tolerates salty and drought well and it likes humid weather. Fruit can grow on it and it can survive if it's grown indoors.

Well, I hoped you like my essay about the plants that I used in my wreath. I learned a lot about the plants as well as the contest itself. Thank you for including our school in the program. I hope you like my wreath and thanks again.