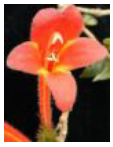

COLUMNEA: An Introduction

Columnea is a large New World genus native to Mexico in the north and ranging southward through Central America to Colombia and Brazil in South America and eastward to the Caribbean island of Jamaica. Epiphytic in nature, and growing in the tropical rainforest canopy, the genus is comprised of erect or trailing perennial shrubs having large decorative flowers in shades of orange and red through to pink and white.

Depending upon which set of taxonomic principles botanists utilize, the genus Columnea either belongs to a large complex of five closely related genera (columnea, trichantha, dalbergaria, bucinellina and pentadenia) referred to as the Dalbergaria Alliance OR all of the five genera comprising the Dalbergaria Alliance belong to one large genus called Columnea. As a result of recent DNA testing, the majority of botanists now favour the single genus concept.

C. 'Midget'

CLASSIFICATION

Family:	GESNERIACEAE
Subfamily:	GESNERIOIDEAE
Tribe:	EPISCIEAE
Genus:	COLUMNEA
Sub-genera:	None
No. of Species:	270+
Type Species:	Columnea scandens

Distribution Range:	Mexico southward through Central America into South America, and eastward to Jamaica.
Name Derivation:	Named for the botanist Fabius Columnea (1567 - 1650).
Root Structure:	Fibrous.
Growth Habit:	Helix, trailing or upright.
Chromosone Count:	18.

C. 'Early Bird'

CULTURAL REQUIREMENTS

Temperature:	Warm growing - 70 to 85 degrees F; 20 to 30 degrees C. A number of Spring or seasonal blooming species and hybrids require cool winter temperatures (60 to 65 degrees) in order to initiate budset, e.g., C. hirta, C. microphylla, C. banksii.
Watering:	Bottom, top or wick watering. Potting mixture must be kept constantly moist during active growth.
Light:	Medium to high light.
Humidity:	40 to 50 percent.
Fertilizer:	Continuously with a non-urea based formulation, e.g., Dyna Gro 7-9-5.
Soil:	Neutral, heading downward to slightly acid; Basic Potting Mixture is appropriate.
Propagation:	Asexually using tip and mallet cuttings, and sexually using seed through self or cross pollination. Hybrid plant material will only reproduce true using asexual propagation methods and techniques.

C. 'Firebird'

C. 'Yellow Dragon'