

## Species of the Month 1/2023 || Heliconia

6 January 2023 || TO NUS Community

A flowering plant native to tropical Central and South America and some Pacific Islands, the flowers of the Heliconia resemble lobster claws and come in a variety of different colours ranging from orange to greenish yellow. A popular ornamental plant, it has been planted at various parts of the Kent Ridge campus to beautify the surroundings, and to serve as a food source for sunbirds.

Let us know what species you would like to see featured by [voting for the next Species of the Month](#).

# CAMPUS IN A TROPICAL RAINFOREST

## SPECIES OF THE MONTH

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Photo by Yan Ling

## HELICONIA

*Heliconia spp.*

### APPEARANCE

- Heliconia is a genus of flowering plants that have reed-like stems.
- The flowers resemble lobster claws, and depending on the species, come in a variety of different colours ranging from orange inflorescence to greenish yellow.

### HABITAT

- Heliconia are native to tropical Central and South America, and some islands in the Pacific.
- They have also found popularity as ornamental plants outside their countries of origin.

### Pollination

- The natural pollinators of Heliconia are hummingbirds in their native habitats.
- In Singapore, sunbirds like the Olive-backed and Crimson Sunbirds feed on the nectar from the flowers, but are unlikely to help in pollination.

### FUN FACT

Heliconia species may be able to recognise and respond to specific pollinators! *Heliconia tortuosa* has been found to respond only to pollination by two species of hummingbirds, most likely due to their beaks being of suitable lengths.

**READ MORE ABOUT THE HABITAT OF THE  
HELICONIA ON CAMPUS BELOW!**

# CAMPUS IN A TROPICAL RAINFOREST

## Ornamental Plants for All Seasons

To beautify the area **Heliconia** have been planted in our Kent Ridge campus! Located at various places around campus, they brighten their surroundings with their vivid inflorescence.



Their vibrant flowers can be found at NUS entrances C and E, as well as the street scape opposite UHC. Another location on campus (kind of) where Heliconia can be found is at the NUH pickup point and the walkway behind Kent Ridge!



As an ornamental plant, they are easy to maintain and survive well even in drought periods with decreased rainfall. However, being tropical plants, their growth rate will slow during drought, and they thrive best in wet conditions.



The **Olive-backed and Crimson Sunbirds** have been observed feeding from the distinctive flowers of the Heliconia, the hardy ornamental providing a new food source for these energetic avians.



Photo by Bird Ecology Study Group

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