

Cynthia Brian's Gardening Guide for bringing a slice of Cuba to your landscape

Cuban plants that make great houseplants in California:

Ixora, commonly called jungle flame, flame of the woods, or jungle geranium with clusters of star shaped flowers.

Poinsettia, a *Euphorbia pulcherrima*, is the most well-known holiday flower. Although red is the most popular color, the bracts are available in pink, white, salmon, and bi-colors. Poinsettias love warmth and humidity and in Cuba grow to be trees.

Tillandsias, the largest genus in the bromeliad family, are air plants that will cling to anything. Natural light, soaking and misting will keep them happy.

Bromeliads, add a touch of the tropics to every home. With flowers of pink, red and maroon, they require minimal care. Fill the cup at the base with water and let them thrive.

Philodendrons are easy care houseplants. Vining philodendrons need a pole to climb; non-climbing will grow upright without any support. They like bright, indirect sunlight, and enjoy an occasional vacation outdoors in the shade.

Snake plant, also known as mother's tongue, is one of the air freshener plants. It requires almost no care at all and will keep you breathing freely.

Mimosa pudica, a perennial herb in the pea family, is the touch-me-not-plant. When touched it closes its leaves, titillating audiences.

Cuban plants to grow in your garden:

Gloryblowers (*Clerodendrum*) make excellent choices for trellises, poles, and other structures in full sun as climbers. Since they are tropical, they need to be protected from frost.

Coleus, painted nettle plant, grows outdoors when it is warm, but being a tender specimen, are best grown as a container or houseplant.

Royal Palm will grow to 60 feet in frost-free areas and is moderately drought resistant, bringing the sway of the island inland.

Bamboo is a fast growing giant grass that makes an excellent privacy screen. Beware, certain species of bamboo can take over, breaking concrete and sidewalks.

Firespike, *odononema strictum*, is an evergreen shrub that tolerates drought producing brilliant panicles of tubular waxy flowers summer through winter.

Ginger, both ornamental and edible, is easy to grow and incredibly pretty. To grow edible ginger, just break off a piece of a healthy, plump ginger root that you buy at the store and plant in the location you want. Leaves die back in winter. Harvest whenever you need to add spice to life!

Look around your house and garden to identify what botanicals you are growing with a Cuban origin. Wishing you a beautiful holiday season of joy, peace, gratitude, and love.

Happy Gardening. Happy Growing.
Feliz Navidad y Feliz Jánuca!

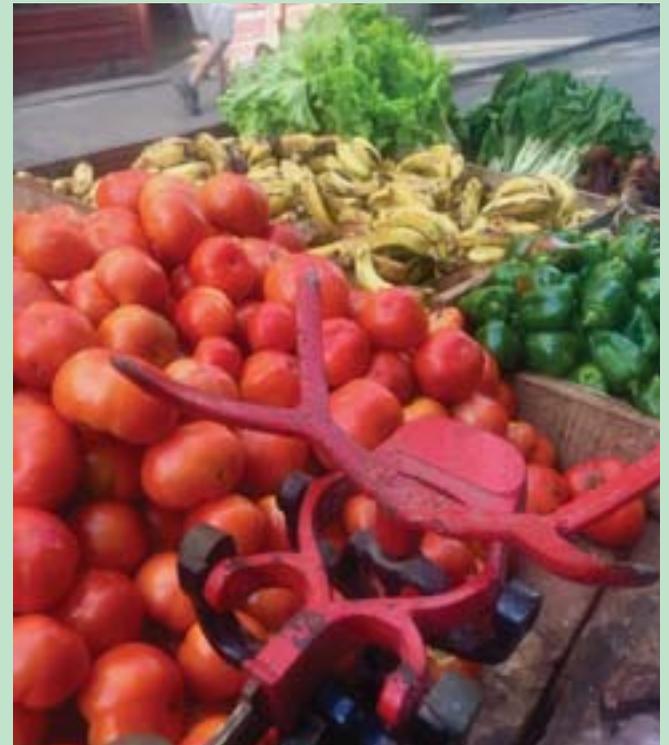
Cynthia Brian



Arabian coffee beans growing in Cuba. Photos Cynthia Brian



A philodendron climbs a tree in the Cuban forest.



Fresh vegetables on a rolling cart in Havana.