

Dear Commissioners & Mayor

I've lived in Key West for over 25 years now, and remember when I first arrived, the proliferation of the beautiful orange blossoms on the Royal Poinciana trees around town. I arrived late in the year, my first year so while I was familiar with the Royal Poinciana' blooms from the start, I was in for a big surprise the next spring when so many trees burst into a full blaze of bloom. As Key West has continued to develop the place for the Royal Poinciana has slowly diminished over the years. In this time, lots of been developed, houses expanded, and new property owners have come on the scene who have chosen not to replace the Poinciana's that once stood on those properties.

Sitting on my porch, whether with my morning coffee or in the evening watching the world go by, I have taken the time to watch the migrating birds picking through the plants for seeds, fruit, and bugs, I realize the importance of providing native vegetation. On the other hand I have also seen our state bird, the Mockingbird, dig around under the Royal Poinciana to find food to take back to its nest; I've seen many warbler, redstart, and finches looking about the branches for insects. I've seen hawks that have had a favorite branch they return to year after year. And most of all, like anyone who has had the opportunity, I've enjoyed the chance to stop and rest in the shade provided by these trees in a town that seems to be getting ever hotter with less trees coming out over the city sidewalks.

If it's considered engaging in whimsy to proclaim the Royal Poinciana the official tree of Key West, I would urge you to do so anyways. Though I don't expect to make it to tonight's city commission meeting, I hope you will count me as one more red shirt out in the audience urging you to approve the Royal Poinciana proposal.

Mark Jacob
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