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Lippenstift - Strauch

Lipstick Tree

Bixa orellena

Out of the seed coat of the Lipstick Tree, a nontoxic colouring agent can be won that was already used for body paintings in pre-Columbian times. It still serves as red lipstick colour worldwide, and in South America it is used for colouring rice. In the Caribbean region, the spice called Annatto is won out of the seeds, which is why the plant is also called Annatto Plant. As a tub plant it can grow up to two meters. Besides the big, heart-shaped leaves, the Lipstick Tree develops rose-like pink-coloured flowers, and starting from the fourth year it also produces chestnut-like, prickled seedpods that contain 30 to 40 red-coloured Annatto seeds.

Natural location: Originally the Lipstick Tree comes from South America, from where it spread to the Caribbean, to Mexico and even to the Philippines.

Cultivation: Seed propagation indoors is possible throughout the year. To increase the germinability, you should place the seeds for about 24 hours in a bowl with lukewarm water for priming. After that, spread the seeds onto moist potting compost and put a layer of 1 cm compost earth on top. Then, cover the seed container with clear film to prevent the earth from drying out. Don't forget to make some holes in the clear film and take it every second or third day completely off for about 2 hours. That way you avoid mold formation on your potting compost. Place the seed container somewhere bright and warm with a temperature between 20° and 25° Celsius and keep the earth moist, but not wet. Usually it takes two to five weeks until germination.

Place: The Lipstick Tree likes half-shaded and full sunny places. During the warmer summer months it can also be kept outdoors, preferably in a slightly wind-protected spot near a heat-preserving wall.

Care: Cultivate the plant in common potting earth, water it regularly and avoid waterlogging. From May until October you may also give fluid fertilizer for tub plants every three weeks.

During the winter: The Lipstick Tree should hibernate in a bright and frost-free place. A temperature of around 10° Celsius would be ideal. Water the plant modestly, so that the clotted roots don't dry out, and spray it regularly with lime-deficient water to prevent pest infestation.

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