

## Bird of Paradise (Strelitzia) Corsage



The Strelitzia, commonly known as the Bird of Paradise, is native to South Africa and belongs to the banana family. The flower, with its rigid form, waxy texture and distinct pattern of sharp triangles, is elaborate, dramatic and showy. The blossom is encased in a bract shaped like a boat and when the bottom of this bract is cut with a sharp knife, the real blossom emerges. The blossom consists of the corolla, which has three petals; two are blue and tongue-shaped and the third petal is usually white or yellow and stands erect and alone. Although the Strelitzia flower on its long stalk is appropriate in the contemporary home, it also adapts well as a dramatic, elegant corsage.

### Assembly Instructions

1. To release the full bloom, use a sharp knife to cut the bottom portion of the boat-shaped bract.
2. Use gentle pressure with the fingers to force out the encased flowers. Use one or possibly two full blooms or one bloom and a few petals from a second bloom to achieve the desired size and proportion of the corsage.
3. Cut into appropriate lengths a quantity of No. 26 wires. Use the criss-cross method when wiring each petal or petal segment. Petals may be in single, duplex or triplex groups. Trim excess stem from the flower and pierce the stem about three-quarters of an inch from the base. Overwrap the wires carefully using light green *Floratape*® stem wrap. Handle the petals carefully to avoid bruising them. Use the blue-tongued petal segments for the center and work the single petals around the outside.
4. For any additional accent, add properly wired and taped emerald frond loops, a satin bow or the softness of a yellow or blue velvet bow to offset the sharp pattern of triangles.

The Strelitzia lasts well if it is handled carefully. Because of the weight and size of a corsage made with this flower, consider using a special anchoring brace. Two or three wired and taped sections can be arranged and styled for an unusual effect for the hair. For formal occasions, consider gold ribbon; for other occasions, choose between shades of yellow, blue, chartreuse or orange.

