

# *Alocasia* spp.: Elephant's Ear, Alocasia, Taro<sup>1</sup>

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<https://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/>

*This document is part of a series originally written by Edward F. Gilman.*

## Introduction

*Alocasia* is a genus that contains over 91 species of plants that are native to the Asia-Pacific region. *Alocasia* are showy, large-leaved, herbaceous perennial tropical plants (Figure 1). Leaves are sagittate, or arrow-shaped, and come in a wide array of sizes, colors, patterns, and variegation, depending on species and cultivar selection (Figure 2, Table 1). This plant has an upright growth habit and has a height and spread that ranges from 2 to 10 feet, depending upon the species selected. Elephant's ear gives a bold tropical effect to the landscape with its unusually large, shield-like, fleshy green leaves. They perform well as accent plants; however, the full size of the species should be considered before planting. The smaller-leaved species may be planted en masse as a groundcover for a rich, tropical effect, or they can be used to edge or border a walkway or patio. Most elephant ear plants are well adapted for container gardening, and some species are well-suited as houseplants.



Figure 2. Leaf—*Alocasia x amazonica* 'Polly': Foliage of African mask plant, *Alocasia* hybrid.

Credit: fabrizio via Adobe Stock



Figure 1. Full form—*Alocasia* spp.: elephant's ear.

Credit: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Alocasia* spp.

**Pronunciation:** al-lo-KAY-zee-uh species

**Common name(s):** elephant's ear, *Alocasia*, taro

**Family:** *Araceae*

**Plant type:** perennial; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8A through 11 (Figures 3 and 4)

## USDA Hardiness Zones 8A-11A

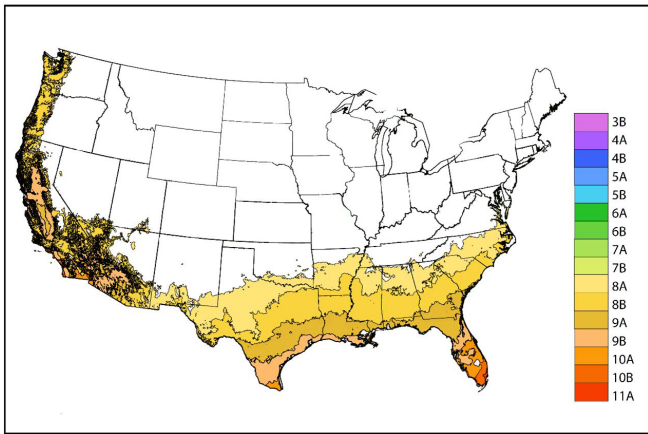


Figure 3. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 8A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map.

Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

## USDA Hardiness Zones 8A-11A

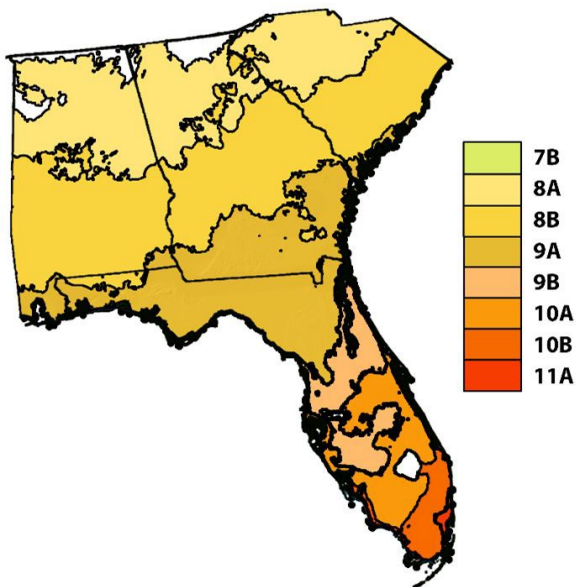


Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the SE Region—USDA Hardiness Zones 8A–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

**Planting month for zone 8:** year-round

**Planting month for zone 9:** year-round

**Planting month for zones 10 and 11:** year-round

**Origin:** not native to North America

**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant, not known to be invasive in Florida

**Uses:** border; edging; container or above-ground planter; groundcover; naturalizing; accent; houseplant

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

## Description

**Growth rate:** fast

**Height:** 2 to 10 feet; dependent upon species

**Spread:** 1 to 10 feet; dependent upon species

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** lobed; undulate

**Leaf shape:** sagittate; arrow-like

**Leaf venation:** brochidodromous; pinnate

**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen

**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches; 12 to 18 inches; 18 to 36 inches; dependent upon species

**Leaf color:** green; silver; copper; red; variegated; dependent upon species

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** green spathe; cream to white colored spadix

**Flower characteristic:** summer-flowering; spring-flowering; inconspicuous

## Fruit

**Fruit shape:** round

**Fruit length:** less than 1 inch

**Fruit cover:** fleshy

**Fruit color:** red, pink

**Fruit characteristic:** showy; berries produced on a spike; rare

## Trunk and Branches

**Trunk/bark/branches:** usually with one stem/trunk

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in partial shade

**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; clay; sand; loam

**Soil salt tolerance:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

## Other

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk

**Winter interest:** evergreen foliage and showy leaves add winter interest

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Toxicity:** all parts of plant are toxic; medium severity; calcium oxalate crystals cause issues if ingested and contact dermatitis

## Use and Management

Alocasia thrives in rich, moisture-retentive soil in partial shade. Many selections grow well in soggy soil, and some species may form dense thickets. The tender leaves are subject to wind damage but do not have any major pest problems. Freezing temperatures kill the foliage, but in USDA hardiness zone 8A and south, the plant grows from the base when warm weather resumes. This plant requires minimal attention once established. It is well suited as an accent, may be used in a container or as a houseplant, as a border or edging, or as a groundcover or planted en masse. If Alocasia is used as a houseplant, it should be in a location with bright indirect light.

Consider the full size of the species selected when planning the landscape. There are many species available to achieve the desired aesthetic in the landscape. Many species and cultivar selections are available in the horticultural industry with varying sizes and foliage coloration and

variegation patterns (Table 1). Care should be taken with this plant around children and pets, as all parts of the plant are toxic if ingested. Alocasia is often confused with Colocasia, which can be invasive in the landscape.



## Design Considerations





With its large, lush, and irregularly shaped leaves, the elephant's ear plant lends a cool, tropical feel to any landscape. The pointed tips, rippled edges, and interplay of light and shadow across the foliage create a bold, coarse texture. For a pleasing contrast, pair it with softer, mounding plants that have small leaves, or with fine-bladed grasses. Companion plants with yellow-green, variegated, or burgundy leaves will accentuate the deep green of the elephant's ear, while flowers in white or warm shades like pink, soft yellow, and coral provide a beautiful pop of color.

## Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases of major concern. Spider mites and mealy bugs may be a nuisance to some species. Root rot may occur from overwatering.

Table 1. A selection of species and cultivars of *Alocasia*, and their notable traits.

Species/Cultivar Name	Image	Size (W x H)	Notable Traits
<i>Alocasia</i> 'Frydek'		1-3' W x 1-3' H	Medium green cordate leaves with light yellow variegation along the veins; leaves have velvety texture.
<i>Alocasia macrorrhizos</i>		6-10' W x 12-15' H	Upright cordate leaves with glossy medium green coloration, this species can grow very large.

Species/Cultivar Name	Image	Size (W x H)	Notable Traits
<i>Alocasia micholitziana</i> 'Frydek' variegated		2-3' W x 2-3' H	Cordate leaves with light green, dark green, and white variegation.
<i>Alocasia</i> 'Mythic Dragonite'		1-2' W x 1-2' H	Shield-shaped leaves with rugose texture and deep purple-greenish leaves.
<i>Alocasia odora</i>		4-6' W x 4-8' H	Upright arrow-shaped foliage with glossy foliage and bright green coloration.
<i>Alocasia</i> 'Polly'		1-2' W x 1-2' H	Sagittate glossy foliage with light-green variegation on the veins and margins, dark-green foliage.



Species/Cultivar Name	Image	Size (W x H)	Notable Traits
<i>Alocasia</i> 'Stingray'		3-5' W x 3-5' H	Cordate leaves with an extended, acuminate, leaf tip resembling a stingray, glossy light-green foliage, marginated texture.
<i>Alocasia</i> 'Silver Dragon'		1-2' W x 1-2' H	Shield-shaped leaves with rugose texture and silver and green variegation.

Image credits: *Alocasia* 'Frydek': Khairil via Adobe Stock; *Alocasia macrorrhizos*: © Alan Melville, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC-ND) via iNaturalist; *Alocasia micholitziana* 'Frydek' variegated: Khairil via Adobe Stock; *Alocasia* 'Mythic Dragonite': photo courtesy of Proven Winners; *Alocasia odora*: danielskyphot via Adobe Stock; *Alocasia* 'Polly': JCM via Adobe Stock; *Alocasia* 'Stingray': Kathy via Adobe Stock; *Alocasia* 'Silver Dragon': Dan via Adobe Stock

<sup>1</sup> This document is FPS 33, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date September 1999. Revised August 2018 and November 2025. Visit the Ask IFAS website at <https://ask.ifas.ufl.edu/> for the currently supported version of this publication. *To learn more about creating and maintaining attractive landscapes that protect Florida's water and natural resources, visit [ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/](http://ffl.ifas.ufl.edu/).*

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