Homestead Gardens Plant Finder

Davidsonville, MD | Severna Park, MD | Smyrna, MD
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Illustris Elephant Ear

Colocasia esculenta 'Illustris'



Illustris Elephant Ear
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Height: 5 feet

Spread: 4 feet

Sunlight: ○ ◐

Hardiness Zone: (annual)

Other Names: Cocoyam, Dasheen, Taro

Description:

Huge, stunning, black-purple leaves with contrasting apple-green veins and stems; a tremendous garden or pondside accent; in colder climates it can be removed after first frost and stored in a cool dry place until spring

Planting & Growing

This plant is native to the tropics and prefers growing in moist environments with evenly warm conditions all year round. In our climate, it is usually grown as an outdoor annual in the garden or in a container. If you want it to survive the winter, it can be brought in to the house and provided with special care, and then returned to the garden the following season. In its preferred tropical habitat, it can grow to be around 5 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 4 feet. However, when grown as an annual or when overwintered indoors, it can be expected to perform differently, and its exact height and spread will depend on many factors; you may wish to consult with our experts as to how it might perform in your specific application and growing conditions.



Illustris Elephant Ear foliage
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This plant does best in full sun to partial shade. It is quite adaptable, prefering to grow in average to wet conditions, and will even tolerate some standing water. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This is a selected variety of a species not originally from North America. It can be propagated by division; however, as a cultivated variety, be aware that it may be subject to certain restrictions or prohibitions on propagation.

Illustris Elephant Ear is a fine choice for the garden, but it is also a good selection for planting in outdoor pots and containers. Because of its height, it is often used as a 'thriller' in the 'spiller-thriller-filler' container combination; plant it near the center of the pot, surrounded by smaller plants and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.

-- THIS IS A TROPICAL PLANT AND SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO SURVIVE THE WINTER OUTDOORS IN OUR CLIMATE --