

## Arum italicum

A member the plant family Araceae, the *Arum italicum* or Orange Candleflower is known by many different common names (Cuckoo's Pint and Lords & Ladies are just a few). It is a woodland species native to Europe. It resembles our native Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

This exotic-looking plant puts on quite a show. Glossy green, arrow-shaped leaves emerge in spring, then wither away as calla-like blooms appear in early summer, followed by spikes of bright orange berries. Attractive foliage emerges again in the fall to complement the berries as the season ends.



Arums are best grown in humus-rich, well-drained soil. Larger leaves will be produced when planted in partially shaded sites. The foliage goes dormant in the summer. In the cold Northwest, after the leaves die in the winter, new leaves emerge the next spring.



This slow growing plant grows 12–18 inches tall and spreads up to 15 inches. It is hardy to 10 degrees F. Arrow-shaped, grayish-green leaves, have light-green midribs that are 8–12" long. Each flower consists of an erect, finger-like spadix covered with minute, creamy white flowers and a large, sheath-like, light-green spathe (bract) which partially envelops the spadix like a hood. After blooming, the leaves and spathe die back leaving only the thick spadix which develops attractive berries that change from green to bright orange.

The *Arum italicum* is known to be invasive in warm climates. The seeds are distributed by small mammals and birds. These perennial bulbs, once established, are difficult to discourage. For this reason consider planting in raised beds or pots. All parts of this plant are toxic to humans if ingested. Handling plants without gloves might result in skin irritation or allergic reaction.

In mild climates a common use of the *Arum italicum* is as underplanting for hosta. When the foliage of the hosta dies down in fall, the foliage of *Arum italicum* replaces it. This acts as a warning to the gardener not to dig up the then hard-to-see crowns of hosta. In summer, the Arum's foliage disappears and is replaced by stalks of orange seeds that appear to be coming from the hosta, adding an extra color dimension to the otherwise green ground-cover.

The *Arum italicum* is valued for unusual and unique characteristics; its large shiny green foliage, hooded flowers and dramatic show of berries. And for the last act, new foliage reappears in the late fall providing an excellent addition to shaded borders and woodlands areas.

## References

PlantFiles: Italian Arum, Large Cuckoo Pint, Lord and Ladies : [Arum italicum](#). Dave's Garden, Retrieved November 1, 2009.

[Arum italicum](#). Kemper Center For Home Gardening, Retrieved November 1, 2009.