

Plant Cultivation Notes

Colocasia.

Colocasias have huge ovate leaves, some growing to monstrous sizes. They originate from tropical Asia and are adapted to thrive in a warm, humid environment and so need to be considered as a tender perennial in the UK. Colocasia can be grown in the UK outside in the summer, in a big pot or in a border, where it looks especially good combined with other jungly, exotic-looking plants such as bananas, begonias or tree ferns, they can also be grown around the edge of a pond or water feature.

The best way to grow Colocasia is to grow them in the ground, where they can reach their full potential. Start tubers off indoors in April in small pots of moist but well aerated compost, we use a mix of coir, vermiculite and perlite. Once roots have developed and leaf growth has started, the tubers need to be potted up, fed and hardened off by slowly adapting them to outdoor life.

Then after the last frost, plant into a well prepared boarder: Colocasia are heavy feeders and it is a good idea to prepare the planting area by adding lots of rich organic material, pelleted chicken manure or well rotten farm manure. Water and feed throughout the summer and watch those big, jungle leaves unfurl.

Overwintering Colocasia can be done in two ways.

The first is to lift the plant from the ground or large pot and cut off the foliage to 20cm from the crown of the tuber. Cut back the roots as well to with in 10 cm of the base of the tuber. Pot up into a pot just big enough to take the tuber. Use a potting mix that is open, well drained but moisture retentive. We use an ericaceous multipurpose with perlite and vermiculite added. Then place your Colocasia into bright position in a warm place (15-21°C). Water only when the compost fully dries out and here your plant can stay until spring and the last frost.

The second method is to treat the tubers much in the same ways as Dahlia tubers. Follow the same process by lifting and cutting back foliage and trimming fine roots. Next allow the tubers to dry out for a few days in a sunny windowsill. Then dry store the tubers in trays filled with a loose open material. Use shredded paper, coarse sawdust or best course vermiculite. The trays should then be placed in a cool frost free place like a garage or shed. Check the tubers regularly for any damage, rot or fungal growth, removing any that show any signs of mushiness ! In spring return the tubers to pots as already described, to restart the growth.

Full Sun/ part shade

Rich, well drained, but moisture retentive soil.

RHS hardiness rating H1c