Colocasia esculenta

COMMON NAMES
Taro

BIOSTATUS
Exotic

CONSERVATION STATUS
Not applicable

CATEGORY
Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Herbs - Monocots

FLOWER COLOURS
Orange

DETAILED DESCRIPTION
Robust perennial to about 2 m tall in good conditions. Very large ovate-cordate leaves to 50 cm long, with the stalk attached well inside the leaf margin. Very variable, leaves and stalks can be white mottled, green, reddish or purple tinged to almost black. The flower is stout and shorter than the petioles. Plants seldom flower and fruit even more rarely.

SIMILAR TAXA
Can be distinguished from other members of the Araceae family by the shield-like leaves with the stalk attached well inside the leaf margin (peltate).

HABITAT
Widely cultivated in many different forms.

GENUS
Colocasia

FAMILY
Araceae

AUTHORITY
Colocasia esculenta (L.) Schott

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

YEAR NATURALISED
1867

ORIGIN
Wild in S.E. Asia; cultivated throughout the Pacific.

REASON FOR INTRODUCTION
Unknown

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL
Plants rarely fruit, most reproduction is vegetative from fragments. Seed is rarely produced.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING
FACW: Facultative Wetland
Usually is a hydrophyte but occasionally found in uplands (non-wetlands).



Colocasia esculenta. Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.



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POISONOUS PLANT
All parts of the plant are poisonous. The roots and leaves may be eaten after cooking.

NVS CODE
COLESC

MORE INFORMATION
https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/colocasia-esculenta/

PDF DATE
25 May 2026