

February Invasive Plant Highlight

Italian Arum



What is Italian Arum?



Italian Arum leaves

Italian Arum, *Arum italicum*, is also known as Orange Candleflower, Cuckoo's Pint, and Italian Lords-and-Ladies. It is native to the Mediterranean region of Europe. It has been cultivated as an ornamental plant for traditional and shade gardens in the U.S. Italian arum is a perennial, herbaceous plant that grows from small pea-sized white bulbs. Many bulbs are produced during the growing season and they make it difficult to eradicate the plant.

Italian Arum is classified as a toxic weed. It is poisonous to humans if ingested and can cause an allergic reaction if touched without using gloves.



Italian Arum can grow 12 to 18 inches. It blooms in the spring with white flowers that make bright orangish-red fruit. It spreads when its seed disperses by water or by birds consuming the berries. The plant invades riparian forest areas, threatening native plant diversity and also can cause increased erosion and slope instability along streambanks.

Better Groundcovers

Alumroot, Wild Ginger, Mayapple, Jack-in-the-pulpit, and Allegheny Spurge

Please Remove It!

If you have Italian Arum, please remove it before it spreads into other adjacent properties. Italian Arum emerges in the Fall and will stay green during mild winters making it easy to spot. Herbicides are not effective since death of foliage above ground does not indicate that the bulbs have died. To remove small patches with a trowel, dig down to root end (about 6 inches) and sift the soil to extract all the small bulbs. Remove the orange-red fruits when they appear to control continued spreading. All parts of the plants should be bagged and disposed of in the trash. Do not compost or leave on the ground. *Be aware the plant is poisonous, and gloves should be used.

More information about Italian Arum:

<https://mgmv.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Italian-Arum-10.0.pdf>

Why Native Plants?

As open space disappears, it is necessary to look at our own landscapes for biodiversity. Native plants promote the unique relationships between our native plants and animals, from the smallest microorganisms, insects and other invertebrates to birds and mammals.

Native plants, from grasses and wildflowers to towering shade trees, form the base of the food chain. Our native insects are uniquely adapted to eat native plants; some are generalists and can eat a variety of plants, but many are specialists that can only digest certain types of leaves based on the chemistry of the plant.

Research by the entomologist Doug Tallamy has shown that native oak trees support over 500 species of caterpillars whereas ginkgos, a commonly planted landscape tree from Asia, host only 5 species of caterpillars. When it takes over 6,000 caterpillars to raise one brood of chickadees, that is a significant difference.

More information on native plants:

www.vnps.org/natives

www.plantnovanatives.org

www.nwf.org/NativePlantFinder

www.audubon.org/native-plants

More information on invasive plants:

www.invasiveplantatlas.org

www.invasive.org



Native Virginia Bluebells

Who We Are?

The City of Falls Church Habitat Restoration Team restores the local ecosystem in city parks. We remove damaging invasive plants then re-plant with natives that benefit our local birds, butterflies, bees, and pollinators.

We are a community task force that supports the City's Green Space department. We have monthly events in the Fall and Spring open to volunteers.

Contact Information

Green Space Manager: Jeremy Edwards

Phone: 571-238-5178

Email: JEdwards@fallschurchva.gov

Website: www.fallschurchva.gov/940/Environmental-Opportunities



Native Butterfly Weed