

Italian Arum

(a.k.a. Italian Lords and Ladies)

Arum italicum

Introduction: This herbaceous invasive is native to Europe, Turkey, and North Africa. Often used as an ornamental plant, especially in flower arrangements, it has now been flagged as invasive in parts of the Pacific Northwest. Caution: All parts of the plants are poisonous; the plant's sap is a skin irritant.

Description: *Arum italicum* is a tuberous perennial with erect stalked leaves and flowering stalks that terminate in a calla-lily-like inflorescence. The plant can grow to 12 inches in height. The glossy leaves are arrow- to spear-shaped and are marbled with yellow or white, growing to 14 inches long. The flower is an erect, finger-like spadix of tiny white to yellow flowers that is partially enveloped by a large sheath-like pale green spathe (bract). The plant flowers in spring to early summer, and after bloom (in summer), the spathe and leaves wither away, leaving only the spadix. Spikes of bright orange-red berries then develop, which last until new leaves emerge in autumn. It will persist as an evergreen through the winter in warmer climates, but will die back in colder climates, to emerge again in the spring.

Habitat: Preferring partially shaded areas or full sun, *A. italicum* is often found in open woodlands or forest margins, and prefers moist, well-drained, humus-rich soil.

Distribution: Native to Europe and North Africa, *A. italicum* is currently invasive in six states, including Oregon and Washington.

Reproduction and Dispersal: *Arum italicum* reproduces by seed and by production of tiny bulblets that break off and are distributed by soil disturbance. Its flowers are monoecious (has both male and female parts) and are pollinated by flies.

Pathways of Introduction and Spread: It is most likely that this plant became invasive by escaping domestic gardens.



Courtesy Missouri Botanical PlantFinder

Threats/Impacts: This plant competes with native species; more research is needed to identify specific impacts.

Early Detection and Prevention: As a common garden ornamental, one can prevent its spread by either planting *A. italicum* in pots or by using native alternatives. It is important to monitor woodlands near residential areas, as this plant favors such areas.

Management Information: There is no management information available. Attempts at manual control are challenging due to the spread of the bulblets.

Research Needs: Management information and specific impacts.

References

Brickell, Christopher and H. Marc Cathey, ed. *The American Horticulture Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants*. New York: DK Publishing, Inc., 2004.

Everett, Thomas H. *The New York Botanical Garden Illustrated Encyclopedia of Horticulture, Vol. 1*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981.

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