

ARACEAE Aroid Family

Fleshy herbs with caustic sap. Climbers with aerial roots, terrestrial members with underground rhizomes. Leaves not parallel-veined as in typical monocotyledons. Flowers microscopic, massed on a fleshy stalk (spadix) cupped by a leafy, often coloured, spathe. Fruit a berry.

Anthurium willdenowii Kunth

Stout-stemmed sprawling plant. Leaf blades more or less elliptic, 15–40 cm long, 4–12 cm wide, on a furrowed petiole, 5–20 cm long. Long-stalked inflorescence with green, strap-shaped spathe, to 12 cm long, and spadix, to 20 cm long. Fruit purple, fleshy, 5 mm in diameter.

Lesser Antilles; common; rooted on trees or boulders in woods and gullies. ▶

Colocasia esculenta (L.) Schott. Wild Eddo

Leaves, heart-shaped, peltate, to 40 cm long, borne on sturdy petioles, to 1 m high, arising in clumps from a central tuberous rootstock. Inflorescence shorter than the leaves with the spathe forming a tube around the spadix.

Asian native; common, naturalised in the wetter parts of the island.

Dieffenbachia seguine (Jacq.) Schott.

Erect herb with unbranched, jointed, fleshy stem, 1–2 m high. Leaves with sparse white variegation, ovate to elliptic, 20–40 cm long, 12–15 cm wide, on sheathing petioles, to 30 cm long. Inflorescence axillary, ± 15 cm long, with white spadix, emerging from the green spathe. ❀ May–Jun.

Tropical America; not common; wet, shady areas.

POISONOUS due to calcium oxalate crystals and protein toxins³⁵ yet leaf reputedly chewed as a male contraceptive^{16, 46}.

Polycrozier, Monkey Tail



Dumb Cane

Philodendron lingulatum (L.) C. Koch



Slender-stemmed climber, rooting at the nodes. Leaves alternate, ovate to oblong, 15–30 cm long, petiole as long, conspicuously winged almost to the blade. Inflorescence ± 15 cm long, the spathe whitish within, green outside, encircling a finger-like spadix.

Greater and Lesser Antilles; rare; Cole's Cave gully.

Philodendron scandens C. Koch & H. Sello

Climber, rooting freely at the nodes, the young shoots pinkish. Leaves leathery, heart-shaped, to 30 cm long, 20 cm wide (mature). Inflorescence ± 15 cm long, the spathe deep crimson within, cowl-like, encircling a fleshy, cream-coloured, finger-like spadix.

Tropical America; rare; Turner's Hall Wood.

Sap caustic³⁵.

Pistia stratiotes L.

Floating rosette plant, to 20 cm diameter, evocative of its common name. Leaves corrugated lengthwise and densely covered in 'unwetttable' microscopic hairs. Reproducing vegetatively by plantlets and sexually by tiny white inflorescences in the axils.

Worldwide; not common; a serious water weed.

Crushed leaf applied to skin eruptions⁴⁸.



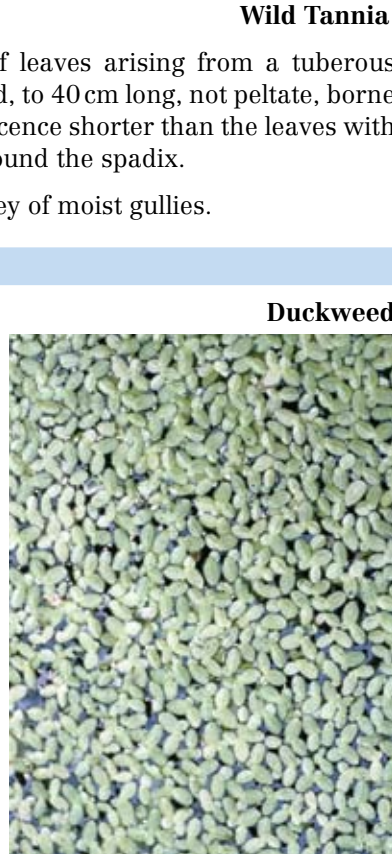
Water Lettuce

Xanthosoma brasiliense (Desf.) Engler

Wild Tannia

Stemless plant comprising a clump of leaves arising from a tuberous base. Leaves shaped like an arrow head, to 40 cm long, not peltate, borne on sturdy petioles, to 1 m long. Inflorescence shorter than the leaves with the spathe forming a greenish tube around the spadix.

Tropical America; common; understory of moist gullies.



LEMNACEAE Duckweed Family

Lemna perpusilla Torr.

Duckweed

Tiny floating plant reduced to what appears to be little more than a floating leaf, 3–8 mm long, 2–6 mm wide, with tiny, thread-like roots. Reproducing vegetatively but also sexually by highly reduced flowers in lateral pouches.

Worldwide; common; a serious weed of ponds.

One of the smallest flowering plants known.



BROMELIACEAE Bromeliad Family

Aechmea lingulata (L.) Baker

Rosette plant comprising a clump of strap-like, greyish leaves, to 1 m long, 4–7 cm wide, with tiny curved prickles along the margins. Inflorescence a loose, panicle to 1 m high, bearing yellow-green flowers, ± 1 cm long.

Tropical America; common; in high rainfall areas, rooted on trees or boulders.



Bromelia plumieri (Morren) L.B. Smith

Plant an open rosette of long, narrow, arching leaves. **Leaves linear, semi-cylindrical, to 4 m long, 3 cm wide, edged with curved prickles.** Flowers mauve and fleshy, to 10 cm long, embedded in a central domed head surrounded by small reddish leaves. Fruit cream-coloured, to 9 cm long, resembling a miniature banana but filled with a watery, acid seed-filled pulp. ❀ May–Jun, ❁ Oct–Nov.

Tropical America; common; gullies and woods.

Eating the fruit can irritate the throat⁵⁰ due to proteolytic enzymes. Distinct from the pinguin used in handicraft which is a *Pandanus* species.



Pinguin, Monkey Banana