

Dracunculus vulgaris, Dragon Arum

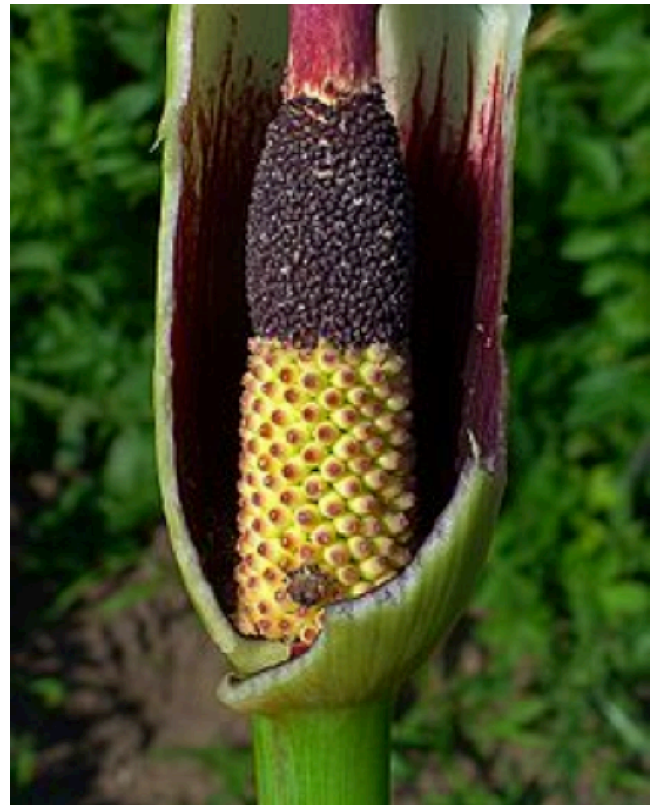
This species, endemic to the Balkans, is characterised by a large purple spathe and a spadix, which has a very unpleasant smell reminiscent of rotting meat. This smell and an associated rise in temperature attracts flies and beetles as pollinators.

Dracunculus vulgaris has both male and female flowers (lower photograph) with the female at the lower part and the male at the top of the spadix. The female flowers are receptive before the ripening of the males ones which avoids self-fertilisation. The pollinating insects slide down the smooth surface of the spathe, and they become trapped for a day by the smooth surface that prevents them from climbing upwards. During this time they crawl over the stigmas, dusting them with pollen from earlier traps. In the next days the anthers of the male flowers split, the spathe withers, and the flies are freed to visit another inflorescence and continue their role as pollinators.

In Greece this plant is called Drakondia as the long spadix is viewed as a small dragon hiding in the spathe.

The large palmate leaves have occasional cream flecks along the veins and the stem is very distinctive with dark-green-to-black and white markings. All parts of the plant are poisonous.

The plant can tolerate some shade but prefers full sun; it can also withstand drought but benefits from a little watering. It prefers a humus-rich, well-drained soil.



Family: Araceae

Genus: *Dracunculus*

Species: *vulgaris*

Common names: Stink Lily, Dragon Arum, Black Arum, Voodoo Lily, Snake Lily and many others.

Origin: The Balkans

Location in GBG: In the 'bulb bed' of the 19th Century Garden



The leaflets grow on an unusual crescent-shaped horizontal branches that grow from the main vertical stem. GBG.

Geelong Botanic Gardens Map



★ *Dracunculus vulgaris*, Dragon Arum



This information was developed
by Jill McGuinness
Volunteer Guide
Friends of
Geelong Botanic Gardens

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