

Adventurous Plants

HOW TO GROW ARISAEMA IN POTS

Indoor Cultivation

As a general rule, most Arisaema will do better if planted out in the ground, provided that the soil is fertile, free draining, and the site is not in full sun. However, many growers do successfully cultivate their plants in pots. In some circumstances, pot culture is preferable, especially if you wish to keep track of offsets or if you are wishing to grow very small species.

For several years I struggled to achieve reliable results using pots for my Arisaema. Whilst my plants often did very well, some tubers would occasionally not put on any bulk, or even become smaller. Worse still would be unpotting at the end of the season to find nothing but a rotten tuber.

Over a number of years I've found that success boils down to following a few simple guidelines. These days I grow the vast majority of my Arisaema collection in pots, particularly the more valuable and rare species.

Pot Type

I have found clay or terracotta pots are more breathable than plastic pots and can help reduce the risk of condensation or moisture building up inside, potentially resulting in a higher risk of tuber rot. On the flipside, they can dry quickly and maintaining correct moisture levels can become difficult. Consequently, I now tend to stick to plastic pots.

Pot size is also important. It is best to underpot Arisaema tubers – very large pots can hold a great deal of water in the compost which can cause rotting of the tubers. Smaller sized pots rarely have this issue. The pot diameter should be at no more than twice that of the tuber. I have noticed a marked decrease in stoloniferous offsets in my pot grown plants, compared to the same species grown in the ground. I assume this is due to the restricted root run.

Pot Type cont...

However, species that produce naturally small tubers can be grown together communally in the same pot without any noticeable difference in tuber or offset development.



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Compost

The compost mix should have the same properties as that for ground-grown Arisaema – free draining, yet capable of retaining some moisture. I tend to use a mix based on the following components: 1 part regular multipurpose compost (good quality avoiding those with extra moisture retaining properties), 1 part perlite, 1 part vermiculite. It is possible to substitute potting bark for the perlite.

Annual repotting is a good idea. This allows the tubers to be checked over and compost and nutrients to be replaced.

Feeding

Some additional feeding is a good idea for pot grown plants. I use a weak solution of a seaweed based liquid feed given periodically throughout the season.

Watering

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Winter Care - watch out for the pot freezing through!

The greatest drawback with pot cultivation is the risk of the pot freezing solid during the winter.

It has to said, tubers in pots left outside all winter have a very low survival rate. If the pot freezes through and the tuber also freezes, the cells will be ruptured and the tuber destroyed.

Tubers that are only partially frozen do not fare much better as the dead parts spread rot to the rest of the healthy tissue.

The only solutions are to move pots to a cool but frost free location for the winter, such as a greenhouse kept just above freezing, or to unpot the tubers and store frost free in a cool location before replanting the following year.

If you are growing your Arisaema outdoors, rather than in a pot, see our more detailed advice page on 'How to grow Arisaema'.



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