

## *Epipremnum aureum* (J.J. Linden & E.F. Andre) G.S. Bunting

## Golden Pothos

(*Epipremnum pinnatum* 'Aureum', *Pothos aureum*, *Rhaphidophora aurea*, *Scindapsus aureus*)

**Other Common Names:** Devil's Claw Ivy, Devil's Ivy, Giant Golden Pothos, Golden Hunter's Robe, Hi-Color, Marble Queen, Money Plant, Neon Pothos, Pothos, Taro Vine, Variegated Pothos.

**Family:** Araceae, in the subfamily Monsteroideae in the tribe Monstereae.

**Cold Hardiness:** A subtropical to tropical species, foliage is hardy only in USDA hardiness zones 10 or warmer, but plants may return from the roots in protected portions of zone 9b.

**Foliage:** Evergreen simple leaves are alternate, cordate, glabrous, with acute to acuminate tips, and pinnate venation; blades are dark green or often with splotches or streaks of yellow to rarely creamy white variegation; the texture is thick and rubbery; juvenile leaves are typically 4" to 6" long with entire margins, whereas mature leaves become progressively larger, up to 30" long, more oval or elliptic, and deeply incised on the margins; petioles are approximately one to two times the length of the blades, nearly rounded at the base of the blade becoming increasingly pronounced in being concave above near the base of the petiole and with reddish or brownish papery wings that are lost as the petiole matures.

**Flower:** Inflorescences are seldom produced in cultivation; tiny flowers in a spadix partially surrounded by a spathe.

**Fruit:** Small elliptical berries occur on a stout central axis; fruit is seldom produced in cultivation and is not edible.

**Stem / Bark:** Stems — thick, stiff, and slightly ridged; succulent with green or green streaked yellow as in the cultivar 'Hi-Color'; stout aerial rootlets, green to brown, are produced most frequently at the nodes, but also from the internodes; Buds — terminal buds are foliose, composed of immature leaves, which are light green to yellow-green in color; lateral buds are encased within the stem and not readily visible at the nodes; Bark — stems become very stout, at least 2" or more thick with time, mostly remaining green or streaked yellow.

**Habit:** *Epipremnum aureum* is a true tropical liana climbing by means of aerial rootlets; leaves increase in size as plants grow high into the canopy developing a dense coarse textured cover over the tree's trunk; this species is a facultative epiphyte, beginning life either as a seedling in soil or in the debris on a branch of a tree.

**Cultural Requirements:** Best grown occurs in partial to dense shade and *E. aureum* is valued for its excellent shade tolerance which is one of the factors making *E. aureum* one of our most popular interiorscape plants; water use is medium and plants tolerate fairly low relative humidity and periodic drought; few insect or disease problems arise in landscape settings; vegetative propagation occurs easily from tip cuttings.

**Pathological Problems:** Leaf spots and botrytis are sometimes encountered; avoid overwatering to discourage root rots; scale insects and spider mites can be occasional pests.

**Ornamental Assets:** The main asset of this species is its showy leaves valued for their toughness, durability, glossy appearance, and colorful variegation; if mature leaves develop, these add even more interest.

**Limitations & Liabilities:** Cold tolerance is the primary limitation; piercing sucking insects are sometimes a problem in interiorscapes; all parts of this plant are reported to be poisonous if ingested; this species has become invasive in some tropical climates, but appears to pose little threat in our region.

**Landscape Utilization:** In our region, interiorscapes are the primary utilization, where it is ubiquitous; it is used in hanging baskets, containers, conservatories, and mallscapes; in the immediate Gulf Coast and deep South Texas it may serve as a shade groundcover or even climbing vine in very protected locations; growth is fairly rapid and this species can be used as a temporary warm season groundcover in other portions of our region.

**Other Comments:** *Epipremnum aureum* is one of our very best interiorscape plants and a fun plant to grow as a seasonal annual or hanging basket where shade presents an issue; it is fun to plant one near the base of a tree or post and watch the heteroblastic change in the leaves as the plant grows upward; a great plant for beginning gardeners to grow indoors or out as *E. aureum* is hard to kill aside from cold exposure; the genus name derives from the Greek words "epi" for upon and "premon" for tree trunk; the specific epithet means yellow and refers to naturally occurring yellow variegation in the leaves.

**Native Habitat:** Native to the Southcentral Pacific region in the Society Islands (Moorea) or Solomon Islands, but *E. aureum* widely planted and naturalized in subtropical and tropical climates around the world.

**Related Taxa:** *Epipremnum* H.W. Schott is a confusing genus of a half dozen or so species that are related to *Monstera deliciosa* and the vining *Philodendron* taxa; *Epipremnum aureum* is sometimes included under *Epipremnum pinnatum* (L.) A. Engler as a cultivar; *E. pinnatum* is another evergreen tropical liana developing highly pinnatifid large lustrous green leaves at maturity that resemble the foliage of *M. deliciosa* more so than that of *E. aureum*.

***Monstera deliciosa*** F. Liebmann  
(*Philodendron pertusum*)

## Swiss Cheese Plant

- *Monstera deliciosa* is also known as Balazos, Breadfruit Vine, Bullet Holes, Ceriman, Cut-Leaf Philodendron, Fruit-Salad Plant, Harpón, Hurricane Plant, Mexican Breadfruit, Monstera, Piñanona Monstera, Split-Leaf Philodendron, Swiss-Cheese Plant, or Window Plant; the genus name is thought to mean monster-bearing in reference to the large leaves; the specific epithet means delicious in reference to the edible ripe fruit.
- Swiss Cheese Plant is a large tropical vine that forms a thick massive leaning or climbing stem; the huge 2' to 3' long leaves are similar to those of *P. selloum*, but the mature leaves of *M. deliciosa* are more elliptic in outline, somewhat uneven about the midrib, and highly dissected with lobes and even elongated circular holes between the pinnate veins near the midrib; hence the common name of Swiss Cheese Plant and references to the lobed leaves in other common names; the highly ornamental foliage is a dark glossy green with lighter yellow-green midribs; variegated forms exist as well; juvenile foliage is much less pinnatifid.
- Although at its best in a tropical rainforest environment with rich acidic soil and uniformly available moisture, this species can be grown in the immediate Gulf Coast with occasional defoliation and / or dieback to the ground; *Monstera deliciosa* is effective as a woody evergreen vine in USDA zones 10 to 13, as a semi-evergreen or herbaceous perennial in protected sites in 9b; avoid high pH soils and site it in full sun to part shade; although a vine at maturity, this plant is slow to affix to trees and structures via aerial rootlets and may require some initial training to get started.
- This species creates a bold coarse-textured tropical look, very lush; it can also be used as a seasonal container plant or in interiorscapes; the fruit has a pineapple or banana flavor and fragrance when ripe, hence the common names referring to the fruit; however, caution is advised as the unripe fruit is not edible due to oxalic acid crystals that are very painful to the mouth and digestive tract.

***Philodendron hederaceum*** (N.J. von Jacquin) H.W. Schott

## Heart-Leaf Philodendron

(*Arum hederaceum*, *Philodendron acrocardium*, *Philodendron cordatum*,  
*Philodendron cuspidatum*, *Philodendron harlowii*, *Philodendron hoffmannii*,  
*Philodendron micans*, *Philodendron microphyllum*, *Philodendron miduhoi*,  
*Philodendron oxycardium*, *Philodendron oxyprorum*, *Philodendron prieurianum*,  
*Philodendron pittieri*, *Philodendron scandens*, *Pothos hederaceus*)

- Also commonly referred to as House Ivy, Money Plant, Sweetheart Vine, or Velvet Leaf Philodendron, *P. hederaceum* is probably the most common of the vining type of *Philodendron* and is almost ubiquitous in the interiorscape industry; leaves are alternate, evergreen, cordate, dark glossy green or with a bronze overtones on the reverse, with a more acuminate tip and are somewhat thinner texture than those of the Golden Pothos with which it is often confused by lay persons; the stems are also thinner and more supple than those of *E. aurea*; leaves on juvenile portions of the plant are smaller, typically 4" to 6", while older leaves become much larger to 19" long by 13" wide; variegated forms and selections with reddish overtones exist; young leaves are velutinous when juvenile, but lose this trait as they mature; petioles may be green or reddish in color.
- Spadices are produced in spathes that vary in color from green, to yellowish green or can be tinged reddish purple, however these are seldom produced in cultivation as interiorscape plants and are not particularly ornamental.
- Heart-leaf Philodendron is used outdoors in zones 10 (9b) to 13 as either a groundcover or climbing vine on trees; the later may be either an intentional use or unintended consequence of an out of control groundcover; *P. hederaceum* is mainly encountered in our region as a popular interiorscape vine used in containers, mallscapes, or conservatories; the specific epithet means like *Hedera* (Ivy).
- This species as well as many other vining *Philodendron spp.* are fraught with taxonomic controversy as one can easily see by the numerous synonyms, being variously classified in different genera including the *Arum*, *Philodendron*, and *Pothos* to name a few; the current thinking lumps several taxa under *P. hederaceum*; the genus name derives from the Greek philo, to love, and dendron, for tree.

**References:** Broschat and Meerow, 1999; Dehgan, 1998; Loeb and Carpenter, 1992; Llamas, 2003; Riffle, 1998; Stresau, 1986; Watkins and Sheehan, 1975; Whistler, 2000.

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