

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

- › Know what Wild Taro looks like
- › Don't allow corms, roots, rhizomes (underground stems that produce both shoots and roots) or seeds to wash into storm drains or local tributaries
- › Always bag the plant parts for disposal in a landfill
- › When removing Wild Taro, wear gloves and protective clothing. Plant sap may ruin clothing and irritate skin as it contains large amounts of oxalic acid



Oxalic acid from cut Wild Taro stem

- › Contact the Cahaba River Society if you find Wild Taro in the Cahaba River or any of its tributaries, such as Shades Creek. If you would like to volunteer to help remove taro contact the Cahaba River Society. If you would like additional brochures contact Friends of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

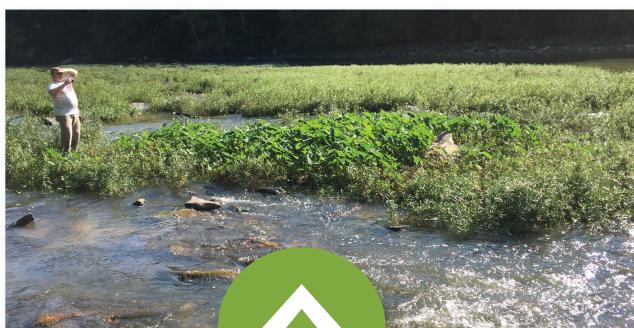
How WILD TARO SPREADS

Wild Taro spreads rapidly by long rhizomes and corms, both forms of underground stems. A parent-plant sends out yards-long rhizomes that quickly generate new plants.

In rivers and streams, these new plants break off easily and establish colonies downstream, increasing the challenge of removing them.



Often homeowners thin Wild Taro out of planting beds and deposit it onto street curbs, where it washes into storm drains and is carried to local rivers. Unless disposal is controlled, Wild Taro can become invasive in rivers and displace native plants.



The result can be that Wild Taro begins growing in the shoals, the habitat for the Cahaba lily and the spawning and feeding of native river wildlife.

NON-NATIVE INVASIVE PLANTS



WILD TARO THREATENS THE CAHABA RIVER

Wild Taro, *Colocasia esculenta*, is a non-native plant that can displace native streambank and mid-stream plants by over-shading and by toxins from its roots.

It is invading the Cahaba River's banks and shoals, threatening the native American water willow, *Justicia americana*, and the Cahaba lily, *Hymenocallis coronaria*, which provide spawning habitats for a large number of aquatic species.

Partners:

FRIENDS OF
BIRMINGHAM
BOTANICAL GARDENS

www.bbgardens.org
205.414.3950



Cahaba
River
Society

www.cahabariversociety.org
205.322.5326

PLEASE HELP US STOP THE SPREAD OF
WILD TARO IN THE CAHABA BASIN

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Cahaba lilies face displacement by Wild Taro

WHAT IS WILD TARO?

Wild Taro has been grown worldwide as a food source for thousands of years and, more recently, as a large ornamental landscape plant. In the U.S., Wild Taro has escaped into urban rivers and streams, replacing native plant species.

BE CAREFUL NOT TO MISIDENTIFY OUR NATIVE ARROWHEAD AS WILD TARO!

The primary feature that distinguishes Wild Taro from our native Southern arrowhead, *Sagittaria australis*, which grows in the same habitat, is the insertion point, where the stem (petiole) attaches to the leaf blade. On Wild Taro, the insertion point is near the middle of the leaf blade (below left). On arrowhead, the insertion point is at the notch or vertex of the cleft of the leaf blade (below right).



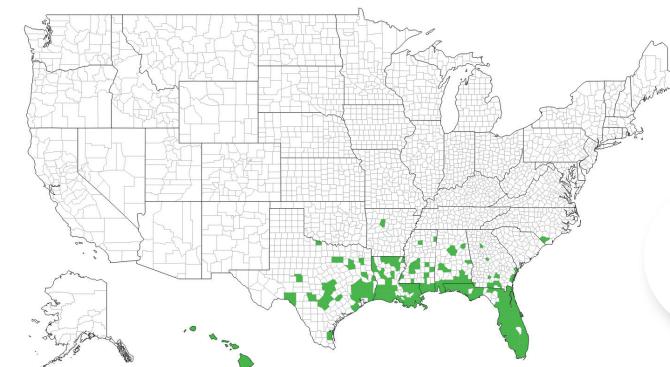
TARO IS A POPULAR LANDSCAPE PLANT

There are many colorful varieties. Wild Taro can grow to be six feet tall and outgrow its planting space quickly.



While any variety of taro may be invasive, the Wild Taro, with solid green leaves, is particularly aggressive.

Wild Taro has moved into the waters of the southern two-thirds of Alabama. It takes root in wet ditches, along the margins of ponds and lakes, on the banks and shoals of rivers and creeks, in swamps and marshes and in hard-wood floodplain forests.

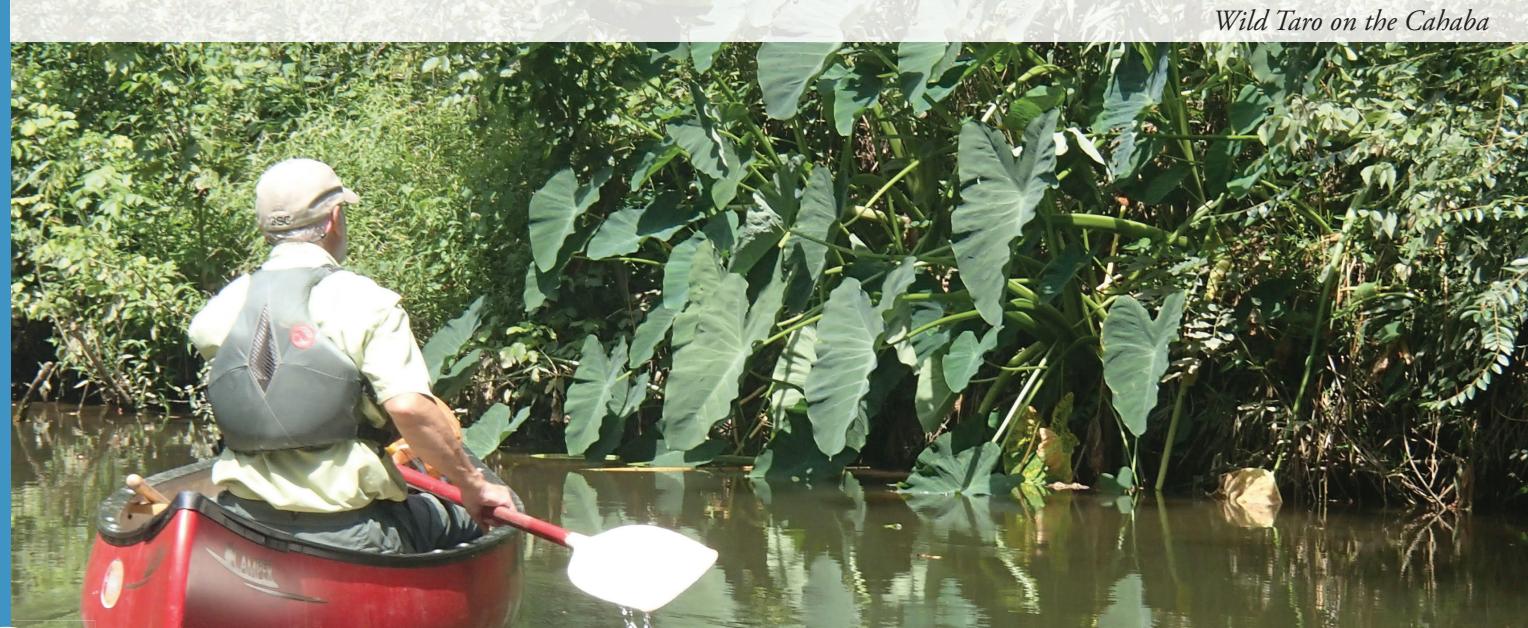


Wild Taro spreads by long rhizomes, producing shoots and roots of new plants

The Coosa River and Black Warrior Rivers are already badly degraded by Wild Taro in some places.

We must keep this destructive plant from becoming established in the Cahaba River as well.

Wild Taro on the Cahaba



“While this widely used landscaping plant might look very interesting and attractive, it is actually creating the early stages of an ecological disaster” — Dr. Randy Haddock, Field Director, Cahaba River Society