

Elephant Ear

Xanthosoma sagittifolium (L.) Araceae

Taro, Dasheen

Colocasia esculenta (L.) Schott Araceae



Biology

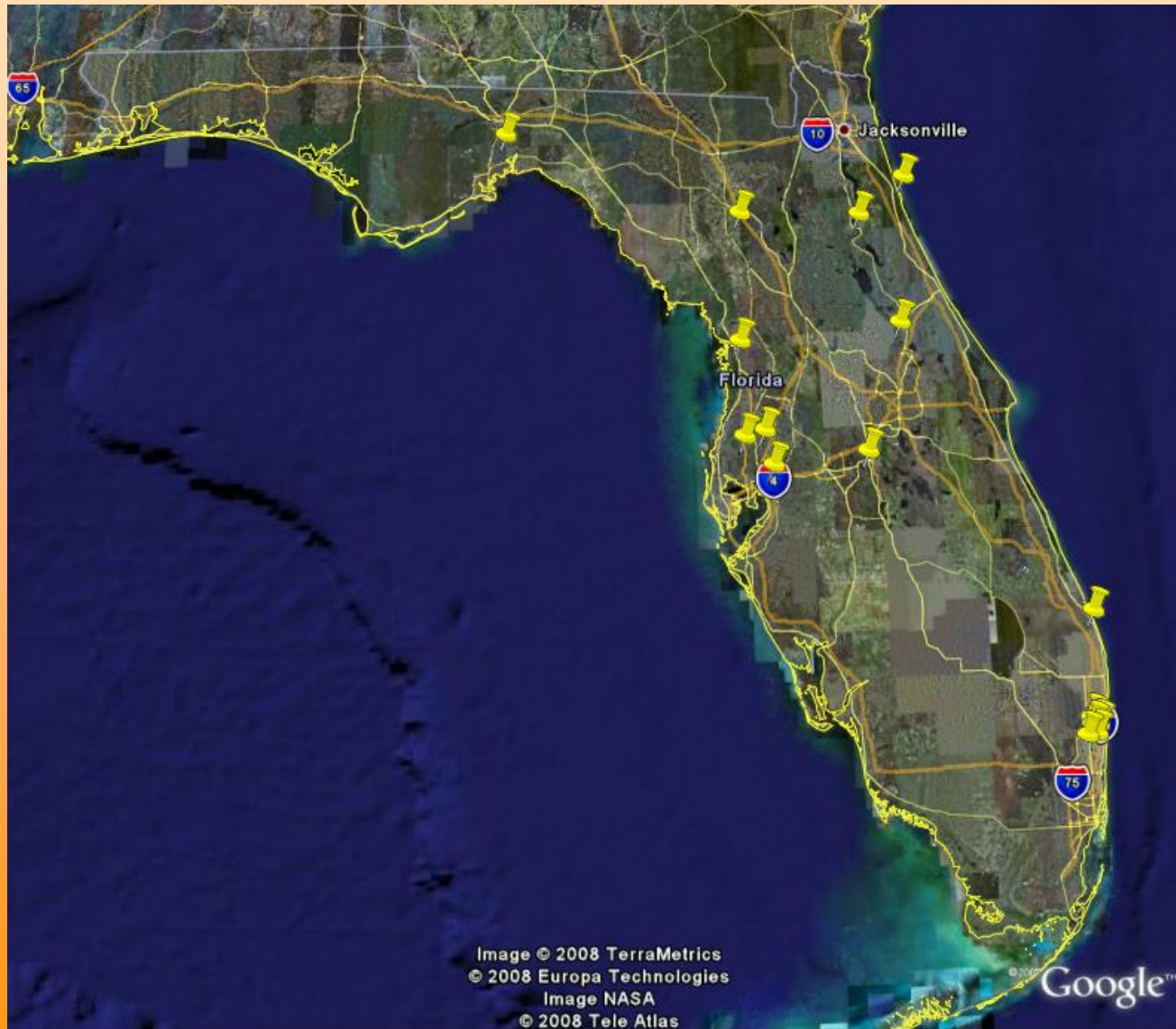


- Elephant ear native to central America
- Taro native to Africa
- Both widely grown for food in several countries
- Introduced to U.S. as an ornamental
- Large, uniquely shaped, fleshy leaves and large tubers

Distribution & Impacts

- Found in central and south Florida
- Both associated with swamps and along streams
- Taro more wide spread, found along the shorelines of central Florida lakes
- Displaces native, other desirable species
- May cause problems with water flow

Elephant Ear Distribution in Florida



Identification

Mature Plant

- Both species are herbaceous perennials, arising from large corms (tubers)
- Also form rhizomes – offshoots from the corms



Leaves

- Leaves arrow-shaped with long petioles and wavy margins
- Taro – petiole attaches several inches from ‘V’
 - Dark green, 4 feet tall
- Elephant ear – petiole attaches at the ‘V’
 - Light green, 9 feet tall



Management

Preventative

Cultural

Mechanical

Biological

Chemical

Preventative



1. Remove existing plants, rouge plants from ditchbanks, removing tubers also
2. Use caution when disposing garden waste – could contain fragments

Cultural



1. Alternative landscape plants to replace taro and/or elephant ear
2. Programs to educate homeowners about the problems associated with these plants and proper identification
3. Maintain good ground cover and mixture of plant species to reduce establishment

Biological



1. There are no known biological control agents available for taro or elephant ear management in Florida or the southeastern U.S.

Mechanical



1. Hand pull plants, small infestations
2. Mowing or cultivation, is very effective, but not a viable option in many areas
3. Both contain oxalic acid, causing irritation to skin – use caution when cutting and removing plants

Chemical



1. Over-the-top applications of glyphosate as a 2-5% solution plus 0.25% surfactant
2. Followup treatment likely, especially on larger, dense populations



Useful Links

- Floridata Homepage:
http://www.floridata.com/main_fr.cfm?state=Welcome&viewsrc=welcome.htm
- University of Florida Center for Aquatic and Invasive Plants:
<http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/welcome.html>
- The Plant Conservation Alliance's Alien Plant Working Group. Weeds Gone Wild: Alien Plant Invaders of Natural Areas:
<http://www.nps.gov/plants/alien/index.htm>

Useful Links

- Pacific Island Ecosystems at Risk (PIER). Plant Threats to Pacific Ecosystems: <http://www.hear.org/pier/threats.htm>
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Plants Database: <http://plants.usda.gov>

Literature Cited

Langeland, K.A. and K. Craddock Burks. 1998. Identification and Biology of Non-Native Plants in Florida's Natural Areas. IFAS Publication SP 257. University of Florida, Gainesville. 165 pp