Introduction

The *Alocasia* genus contains a variety of showy, large-leaved, tropical plants, some with colorful leaves (Figure 1). There is a wide variety of leaf sizes, color, and variegation among species. Elephant's ear gives a bold tropical effect to the landscape with its unusually large, shield-like, fleshy green leaves. They perform well as accent plants but some selections grow very large. For this reason, only one or two of these large-leaved types are needed in most residential landscapes. Of course more can be used if the smaller selections are planted. The smaller-leaf types can be planted in mass as a ground cover for a rich, tropical effect, or they can be used to edge or border a walk or patio. Most are well adapted for container gardening.

General Information

Scientific name: *Alocasia* spp.
Pronunciation: al-lo-KAY-zee-uh species
Common name(s): elephant's ear
Family: Araceae
Plant type: perennial; herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 8B through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 8: year round
Planting month for zone 9: year round
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round
Origin: not native to North America
Uses: border; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; naturalizing; accent
Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Figure 1. Elephant’s ear.

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**Description**

**Growth rate:** fast  
**Height:** 2 to 10 feet  
**Spread:** 1 to 10 feet  
**Plant habit:** upright  
**Plant density:** open  
**Texture:** coarse

**Foliage**

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem  
**Leaf type:** simple  
**Leaf margin:** lobed; undulate  
**Leaf shape:** sagittate (arrow)  
**Leaf venation:** brachidodrome; pinnate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches; 12 to 18 inches; 18 to 36 inches  
**Leaf color:** variegated  
**Fall color:** no fall color change  
**Fall characteristic:** not showy  

![Figure 3. Foliage of Elephant’s Ear.](image)

**Flower**

**Flower color:** green  
**Flower characteristic:** summer flowering; spring flowering

**Fruit**

**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** fleshy  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**

**Trunk/bark/branches:** usually with one stem/trunk  
**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

**Culture**

**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** extended flooding; acidic; acidic; clay; sand; loam  
**Soil salt tolerance:** poor  
**Plant spacing:** 36 to 60 inches

**Other**

**Roots:** sprouts from roots or lower trunk  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant  
**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

**Use and Management**

Performing best in rich, moisture-retentive soil in full sun or shade, elephant’s ear will require little attention once established. Many selections grow well in soggy soil and some will invade these areas forming dense thickets. The tender leaves are subject to wind-damage but do not have any major pest problems. Freezing temperatures kill the foliage, but in USDA hardiness zone 8b and south the plant grows from the base when warm weather resumes.

**Pests and Diseases**

There are no major pest problems.