

# *Caladium x hortulanum* Caladium<sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

The distinctive arrow-shaped foliage of caladium is available in a large array of color combinations and heights, allowing a profusion of landscape applications. Most effective when massed together, caladium displays a neat growth habit and a multitude of beautiful leaves emanating from a single tuber. This plant draws attention when mass planted as a groundcover or edging. It also looks great planted in a container in a shady spot.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Caladium x hortulanum*: Caladium  
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

## General Information

**Scientific name:** *Caladium x hortulanum*

**Pronunciation:** kuh-LAY-dee-um x hor-too-LAY-num

**Common name(s):** caladium

**Family:** Araceae

**Plant type:** perennial; ground cover; herbaceous

**USDA hardiness zones:** 8 through 11 (Figure 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

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Uses:** container or above-ground planter; ground cover; edging; border; accent; suitable for growing indoors

**Availability:** generally available in many areas within its hardiness range



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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## Description

**Height:** 1 to 2 feet

**Spread:** 1 to 2 feet

**Plant habit:** upright

**Plant density:** open

**Growth rate:** fast

**Texture:** coarse

## Foliage

**Leaf arrangement:** most emerge from the soil, usually without a stem

**Leaf type:** simple

**Leaf margin:** undulate

**Leaf shape:** ovate; cordate; saggitate (arrow)

**Leaf venation:** palmate

**Leaf type and persistence:** deciduous

**Leaf blade length:** 8 to 12 inches

**Leaf color:** purple or red; green

**Fall color:** no fall color change

**Fall characteristic:** not showy

## Flower

**Flower color:** white

**Flower characteristic:** summer 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:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig color:** not applicable

**Current year stem/twig thickness:** not applicable

## Culture

**Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade

**Soil tolerances:** clay; sand; acidic; loam

**Drought tolerance:**

**Soil salt tolerances:** poor

**Plant spacing:** 6 to 12 inches

## Other

**Roots:** not applicable

**Winter interest:** no special winter interest

**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

**Invasive potential:** not known to be invasive

**Pest resistance:** long-term health usually not affected by pests

## Use and Management

Growing best in partial shade, caladium is tolerant of full sun conditions when provided with rich soil and sufficient moisture. Tubers should be set 3 to 5 inches deep in loose soil. Space plants on 8 to 12 inch centers for a thick ground cover effect. Mass plants in the front of a shrub border to accent an area. It grows nicely in the shade of existing trees.

Except in USDA hardiness zones 8b through 11, caladium tubers need to be dug and stored each year before frost. Even in locations where caladiums may be left in the ground, the tubers seem to perform better when dug and protected from wet winter soils. Water should be gradually withheld as the leaves naturally start to yellow in fall, then the tubers dug, cleaned of soil, and left to dry in semi-shade for about 10 days. The tubers should be dusted with an insecticide-fungicide prior to being stored in dry peat moss or vermiculite at temperatures between 50°F to 60°F. This helps prevent rot.

A few of the many popular caladium cultivars available include: 'Frieda Hemple', lush solid red leaves with a green border, 18 inches tall; 'Carolyn Wharton', large bright pink leaves with rose veins flecked with green, 24 inches tall; 'White Christmas', white leaves with green veins, 24 inches tall; and 'Little Miss Muffet', compact growth, lime green leaves dotted red, 8 inches tall. There are many others.

Propagation is usually by division of the tubers and rarely by seed.

Problems include mealy bugs, slugs, snails, caterpillars, mites, and grasshoppers. None are normally very serious.

## **Pests and Diseases**

Tubers are susceptible to fungal diseases.