

Calathea makoyana Peacock Plant¹

Edward F. Gilman, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

Beautifully marked leaves in various shades of green, cream, white, pink, and silver held aloft on maroon stems make peacock plant an attractive, clump-forming plant for outdoor use or as a house plant. The undersides of the leaves are dark purple making a striking contrast to the lighter colored tops of the leaves. Flowers are small and inconspicuous to all but the astute observer. The striking foliage gives this plant distinction.



Figure 1. Full Form—*Calathea makoyana* Peacock plant.
Credits: Edward F. Gilman, UF/IFAS

General Information

Scientific name: *Calathea makoyana*

Pronunciation: kal-luhth-EE-uh mack-oy-AY-nuh

Common name(s): peacock plant

Family: *Marantaceae*

Plant type: herbaceous; perennial

USDA hardiness zones: 10 through 11 (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Credits: undefined

Planting month for zone 7: year round

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

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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor; Ryan W. Klein; and Gail Hansen; Environmental Horticulture Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: variegated

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: white

Flower characteristic: flowers periodically throughout the year

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: less than ½ inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: green

Current year stem/twig thickness: thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; slightly alkaline; acidic

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: sprouts from roots or lower trunk

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Pest resistance: very sensitive to one or more pests or diseases which can affect plant health or aesthetics

Use and Management

A porous potting media high in organic matter is preferred for best leaf color and growth but avoid constantly wet soil as root-rots are quite damaging. Filtered light is needed as bright light will wash out the brilliant leaf colors. High humidity is vital for growth as a house plant, with daily mistings recommended. Plant on three-foot centers for mass planting outdoors. Peacock plant also works well as a tall ground cover toward the front of a shrub border. It performs well in a container on a deck or patio in the shade.

Propagation is by cuttings or division.

Pests and Diseases

Mites can be a serious pest problem, particularly if the plant is in a sunny location.

No diseases are of major concern.