PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Lasia spinosa* (L.) Thwaites

**GENUS** *Lasia* **FAMILY** Araceae

**COMMON NAMES** Lasia, Livid flower, Unicorn plant

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Leaves, Roots, Fruit, Flowers, Rhizome

Young leaves are eaten as vegetables. They must be cooked or fermented to remove the bitter and poisonous hydrocyanic acid. (This breaks down with cooking)
The fruit are eaten after being put in salt water (brine).
The leaf stalks are peeled and used in curries to add flavour.
The flower spadix is cooked as a vegetable. The harvested flowers can be stored for 7 days.
The tubers are peeled then eaten after boiled. The corms can be stored for long periods in dry, well ventilated rooms. Leaves can be stored for 3 days.

## DESCRIPTION

A big leafy herb. It often has a creeping rhizome. It grows to 40-120 cm high. The stems are thorny. Leaves grow out of the ground. They are sword shaped or with lobes extending three-quarters of the way to the midrib. The leaves are thorny along the veins. Leaves are 30-45 cm long and 25 cm wide. The leaf stalk is 25-50 cm long. Leaves are medium green. The leaf like structure around the flower is twisted and opens out only at the base. It is 15-30 cm long and brown. The flowers occur tightly together without flower stalks. The flowers have both sexes. They are like a cylinder and 2-3 cm long by 7.5 mm wide. They increase to three times this size. The fruit is green, fleshy and spiny. It is composed of a berry which is oval and has a sharp point at the top. It is 1 cm long. The seed are 5 mm long and 3.5 mm wide.

## HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is found in moist shady areas along rivers in evergreen forest. It grows in swampy places and wetlands. It can tolerate slightly brackish water. It needs a temperature between 25-35°C. In Papua New Guinea it grows from sea level to 500 m altitude. In Vietnam it grows from sea level to 1,000 m above sea level. In Yunnan.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

Plants can be grown by the creeping stems and also by seeds. The small tubers off the corms can be planted. They are planted in a hole.

## NOTES

Rhizomes and leaves are used in medicine. There are 2 Lasia species.
Report shows that it had a wide range of subordinate metabolites such as alkaloids, flavonoids, tannins, saponins and steroids.76 leaves and stalks have demonstrated
profound anthelminthic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, anticestode, and antinematode efficacy.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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