

Araceae arum family

A larger family with 110 genera, it is best developed in the tropics, with 1800 species worldwide. Nova Scotia hosts three distinctive plants in three genera. The small flowers are borne on fleshy spikes called spadices, each subtended and surrounded by a spathe. They may be perfect or unisexual. Fruits are berries or compound.

Key to genera

A. Leaves compound.

Arisaema

aa. Leaves simple.

B

B. Leaves smooth, glossy; spathe shining white.

Calla

bb. Leaves very large and rugose; spathe purplish.

Symplocarpus

Arisaema Mart

A genus of 150 species, producing red berries. Flowers may be perfect or unisexual, covering the lower portion of the spadix, subtended by green or purplish spathe. The perianth is absent. Fruits contain 1–3 seeds.

Arisaema triphyllum (L.) Schott

Jack-in-the-pulpit; arisème de Stewardson



A colonial species, each plant is less than 60cm tall at anthesis, but may reach 1.5m at maturity. Leaves bear three leaflets, smooth around the margins although sometimes crisped. The lateral leaflets are unequal at the bases. Sometimes it is mistaken when young for poison-ivy. However in flower, these plants resemble no other species.

The spathe is heavily ridged, has green and white stripes and obscures the spadix (Jack) by folding over it.

Nova Scotia has two subspecies. *Ssp. stewardsonii* (Britt.) Huttleston has the spathe acuminate, prominently striped with white and fluted. The leaves are green below. The typical *ssp. triphyllum* has a less fluted spathe cap, wider and streaked reddish or brown, abruptly acute at the tip. The lateral leaflets are bluish green below.

Photo by Jamie Ellison



Photo by Beth Cameron

Flowers from mid-May through July.

Wet woods, alluvial soils, oxbows and intervals.

Common from Digby Co to Cape Breton.

Ranges from NS to MB, south to TX and FL, with ssp. *stewardsonii* more restricted in range.

Calla **water-arum**

A monotypic genus, its species is a perennial herb producing few-seeded berries. The basal leaves are petiolate. Lower flowers on the spadix are perfect, whereas the uppermost flowers may be staminate. The spathe is expanded, white and surrounds the spadix but does not enclose it.

***Calla palustris* L.**

Water-arum; Wild Calla; calla des marais



Plants arise on stout stems, reaching 30–40cm in height. Often rooting at the nodes and forming small colonies, each plant has thick glossy green leaves. Conspicuous in flower, as the spathe is shining white, standing behind the spadix.

Flowers from May through July.

Bogs, streamsides, lakesides at the edge of swampy pools, usually in wet peat.

Photo by Ross Hall



Photo by Alain Belliveau

Uncommon in southern counties, becoming more so from Yarmouth through the Annapolis Valley and Cumberland Co. to northern Cape Breton.

Ranges across Canada and south to BC, IL and MD; Eurasia.

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***Symplocarpus* Salisb.** **Skunk cabbage**

Another monotypic genus, including a species with the unmistakable odour of skunk. The flower is a fleshy purple spathe enclosing a rounded spadix. The perianth and style are persistent. Anthesis occurs before the leaves erupt. The large seeds emerge from the spongy spadix.

***Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Salisb.** **Skunk Cabbage; chou puant**



Photo by Sean Blaney

The hooded spathe stands 10cm tall erupting through the snow in some years. Its disagreeable self is long-persistent. Leaves emerge about six weeks after flowering, and are very large, sometimes 1m in length. The venation is prominent.

Flowers in May.

Frequents riparian swamps, swales, bogs, sphagnous spuce woods and wet thickets.



Photo by Eugene Quigley

Found in Digby and Yarmouth Co. and Cumberland Co.
Scattered in the southwest though abundant where found.

Ranges from NS to MB, south to TN, IA and NC; Asia.