

Growing Taro

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Last year Pam and I made a trip to the Dover Air Force Base commissary. While shopping for some food supplies, we encountered a vegetable known as Taro Root. Taro is a fascinating plant often used in Mexican and Asian cuisine. The plant itself is part of the Colocasia Family. The plant does not send out any runners or suckers nor does it produce seed pods so the question remains how in the world does this plant propagate?

This Elephant Ear look alike produces a starchy root with a brown outer skin and a white flesh. This tropical plant has a sweet taste which is similar to the popular potato. The roots can be processed into flour and used as any other flour would be. This large green leafed plant is rich in fiber, carbohydrates along with an abundance of vitamin A, C, E, B6, and minerals such as magnesium, iron, zinc, phosphorous, potassium, manganese, and copper.



We purchased two Taro Roots in order to propagate them here at home. There are two recommended methods to propagate this plant. The first is to take the root and wrap it in a paper towel. Dampen the paper slightly and do not cover the crown of the root. Next place the root and paper towel into a Ziploc bag. This process is supposed to assist the roots in getting established. Finally, place the bag under some light. The second method is to simply plant the root into a container of soil. When planting the root, be sure to cover the crown at least with two inches of soil. In this experiment we are going to complete both methods to see which one is the better choice.





As you look at one of the photos you see a pointed end and a rounded section. The pointed end is the part of the root which will go into the soil and where the roots will emerge from. Select a good size pot, and put in a good quality planting soil. No special additives are need to grow the Taro.



Taro generally grows in the tropics and needs 50 degree or higher weather to propagate. Needless to say, it does not do well in our winter months. Within three weeks of planting, you should see some

growth beginning. The plant will grow quickly once it starts. It will eventually get to the size where it will need to be re-potted into a larger pot. In 3 to 4 months, you can fertilize the plant with a potassium-based plant food.

In the fall usually or after nine months it will be ready to harvest. Using a garden fork at this time you can dig up the plant and shake the soil out of the roots. Be careful as you dig them out that you do not harm the tubers. Harvest the tubers and deposit the tops into the compost bin. Some of the new roots can be replanted for additional Taro plant if you so desire.

When Pam opened up the Ziploc bag which held the Tara Root, she found it had an abundance of roots. The Tara Root which was placed directly into the ground appears to be growing roots as well. Now we only had to plant it.

