



Botanical name: **Colocasia esculenta**

Common name: **Swamp Taro**

Tongan name: **Talo Tonga**

Other names:

DESCRIPTION & USES

There are three types of taro grown in Tonga:

American taro : Scientific name - *Xanthosoma spp.*, Tongan name - *Talo Futuna*;

(b) Common taro: Scientific name - *Colocasia esculenta*, Tongan name - *Talo Tonga*;

(c) Giant taro: Scientific name - *Alocasia macrorrhiza*, Tongan name - *Kape*.

All types of taro are important subsistence crops and are also produced for the domestic and export markets. In the 1993 Land Use and Crops Survey, it was found that American taro and giant taro were grown by 85 percent of households surveyed, with about 1750 acres, 466, and 2806 acres being planted to giant taro, common and American taro, respectively.

Taro

PRODUCTION NOTES

Climate: All types of taro are suited to the wetter areas, but American and giant taros also grow well in regions of relatively low rainfall.

Soil: Requirements for each are moist, fertile, well-drained soils.



Propagation: Planting materials used for American taro production are mainly corm pieces or headsets and suckers; materials used for common and giant taro production are either suckers or head sets.

Planting time: Taro can be planted all year round but the best time is during the cool wet months. Planting is often coincides with yam harvesting.

Planting density: For monocrops of American and common taro, planting density is from 2000 to 4000 plants per acre (i.e., a spacing of around 1.5 m x 1.5 m to 0.9 m x 0.9 m). For giant taro, planting density is on average 650 plants per acre (i.e., spacing of 2.5 m x 2.5 m). However, research has shown that the optimal spacing for intercropping is 3.5 m x 3.5 m, and for monocropping 1.5 m x 1.5 m.

Intercropping: Taro is closely associated with yam cycle. All taro varieties may be planted during yam cultivation; American taro is frequently planted into the yam holes as the yams are harvested.

Growth period: American taro can be harvested after 8 months, but is usually grown for 12 to 24 months. Common taro and giant taro are harvested after 7 to 12 months and 12 to 15 months, respectively.

Disease and pest control: Presently there are no serious pests of taro in Tonga. Pests that do occur include cluster caterpillars, taro leafhoppers and spider mites. Stem/corm rot

and Dasheen mosaic virus can be a problem in common taro. Corm rot may be controlled by planting in well-drained soils and using suitable crop rotations.

Storage: American taro plants can be left unharvested for up to two years without the cormels rotting; common and giant taro may only left unharvested for a few months after maturity as rotting may occur in wetter soils. After harvest, all taros can be stored up to three months.

Products: The corms of common and giant taro are eaten while normally only the cormels of American taro are used as food since the main corms are often very acrid. The young green leaves, *lu*, of the American and common taro plants can eaten as a green vegetable after cooking.

Marketing notes

Talamahu Market report showed in 2019-2025 the annual supply of taros sold at Talamahu market were 8,697.68 and 2,870.23 tonnes of giant taro, American taro and common taro respectively. The average prices at Talamahu Market from 2019-2025 were giant taro (T\$1.79/kg); American taro (T\$2.13/kg); and common taro (T\$2.70/kg). Average annual exports were American taro (2,858.19 tonnes), giant taro (2,870.23 tonnes), and common taro (5,055.91tonnes).

For more information

Address: Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forests (MAFF)