

Aristolochia elegans - Dutchman's Pipe/Calico flower

This is an evergreen vine with unusual flowers and heart shaped leaves. It is native to Brazil. Flowers are produced throughout the year. Flowers look almost like an old night cap or like pipes with elegantly curved stems. *Aristolochia elegans* like to grow in a light and airy place, but not in direct sunlight. Keep summer temperature from 20-30°C degrees and winter temperature above 10°C degrees. Water regularly during the growth period, once or twice a week. Fertilize with a balanced fertilizer every third watering throughout the growing season. Calico flowers grow best in rich, well-drained soil. These vines are host plants for butterflies and a wonderful addition to any butterfly garden.

This neat little vine deserves more attention. Calico flower is an evergreen vine with very unusual flowers and beautiful heart-shaped leaves. The leaves are rich glossy green, about 7.5cm long by 5cm wide and grow closely, creating a dense mass of foliage. Slender woody stems twine gracefully in tight coils around fence wire and other supports to lift the vine to heights of up to 3.5m. In Summer the vine produces quantities of 7.5cm flowers scattered among the drooping leaves. The flowers are light green and covered with purple brown spots on the flared lips of the blossom in a pattern reminiscent of calico fabric. Because of their unique shape they are sometimes called dutchman's pipe because they resemble an old-fashioned smoking device (something like Sherlock Holmes' pipe.)

Location

Aristolochia species are found all over the world. *A. elegans*, calico flower, is native to South America, with Brazil being its home territory.

Culture

Requires only average soil to look good. Does well in light sandy soils as well.

Light: Part sun to shade.

Moisture: Average moisture. Will endure short periods of drought and still look fresh. The tops will be killed to the ground in freezing weather below -7°C but will return in the spring.

Propagation: By layers and by seed. "Volunteer" seedling plants are often found near mature vines.

Uses

Because it has such luxuriously dense foliage this vine makes a great screen. It's also nice growing up a trellis on the patio or near an entry where the striking flowers can be seen at eye level by passers-by.

Features

Beautiful foliage, unusual flowers, free from pests and ease of growth.

Propagation

Barely cover seeds with a quarter inch or less of clean peat, keep moist (not soggy) and warm but no full sun. A piece of plastic wrap helps keep the soil moist between waterings. Prick individual seedlings out into individual tubes as soon as they are large enough to handle. Grow on in their tubes until at least 25cm or as desired. Plant out in their permanent position after the danger of frost has passed. As a vine the plant of course requires a frame, wall, trellis or something to grow upon. Site in full sun but this species can benefit from protection from afternoon sun. Protect young seedlings from slugs and snails.

