

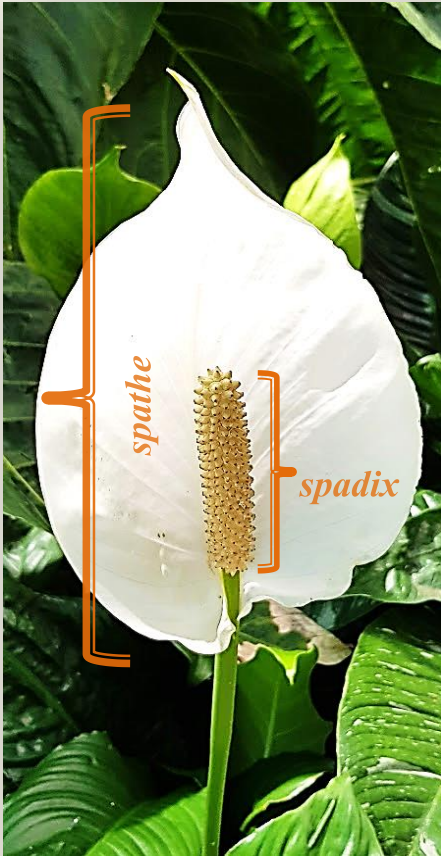
# *Anthurium* *andraeanum* Flamingo Lily

These exotic, tropical plants with showy flowers that look as if they were manufactured from plastic are natives of Ecuador and Columbia. They are important worldwide as horticultural plants, and especially popular as ornamental indoor plants. In their natural environment, they are classified as epiphytic *subshrubs* and are usually found growing in wet tropical environments.

The Flamingo Lily, *Anthurium andraeanum*, belongs in the Arum family (Araceae), where species are commonly referred to as *aroids*.

The flowers of aroids are quite unique. They are small, grouped tightly together in an elongated spike (the *spadix*), and enclosed by a *spathe*, a large, sometimes colourful, modified leaf. There are about 4,000 species in 140 genera, mostly from the New World Tropics, although some in the Old World Tropics and from northern temperate regions of the world.

There are numerous aroids of significant economic importance, particularly the tropical starchy crops, such as Taro (*Colocasia esculenta*),



The Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum chlearispathum*) is a typical aroid flower.



Distribution of *Anthurium andraeanum* in Ecuador and Columbia

Giant Taro (*Alocasia macrorrhizos*) and the Fruit Salad Plant, (*Monstera deliciosa*). Many, such as *Spathiphyllum*, *Zantedeschia* and *Anthurium* are important in the horticultural industry,



Aroids are toxic: every component of the plant contains saponins and the leaves contain calcium oxalate crystals in the form of *raphides*, needle-shaped crystals sharp at one end, blunt at the other, that can cause severe irritation of mouth and throat.

Some plants in the Araceae have flowers that are referred to as *thermogenic*; the spadix heats up for several hours to temperatures more than 10°C above the ambient temperature. These high temperatures release aromatics that attract pollinating insects, mostly beetles. This temporary release of heat is the result of starch being combusted in an inefficient pathway of respiration in an exquisite example of co-evolution. Some species, such as the

famous Titan Arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*), produce particularly foul-smelling odours, not dissimilar to that of rotting meat, to attract pollinating flies, the high temperatures boosting the distance the smells can travel.

Australia has about 16 genera of Araceae, including about 40 species, some native, some naturalised.

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Plantnet, New South Wales Flora Online: <https://plantnet.rbg Syd.nsw.gov.au/cgi-bin/NSWfl.pl?page=nswfl&lvl=fm&name=Araceae>

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Wikipedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthurium\\_andraeanum](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthurium_andraeanum)

Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Araceae>



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***Amorphophallus titanum* (Araceae), Titan Arum, in flower, New York Botanical Garden, June 27, 2018.**

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