AROIDPEDIA

The Spathe

What opened this month on Aroidpedia

NO. 2 · OCTOBER 2026

Four new genera, and a vine with a borrowed name.

Since the launch edition, four more genera have opened on Aroidpedia, each on a page of its own. Between them they have brought 263 new records to the archive, and the largest of the four, the second-largest genus in the family, is still arriving.

This issue also brings a new place to start for anyone just finding their way into aroids, a map that can draw the groups inside a genus, a phone menu that searches as you type, and the story of the most familiar vine in the houseplant trade, sold under the name of a genus it does not belong to.

NEW ON THE SITE

From the canopy to the swamp.

Since the launch edition, *Scindapsus*, *Syngonium*, *Cyrtosperma* and *Philodendron* have joined Aroidpedia, each on a page of its own: what the genus is, where it grows and how to tell it from its look-alikes, with its morphology, its cultivation, a timeline of its species and a map of its native range and climate.

START WITH PHILODENDRON → aroidpedia.com/philodendron EVERY GENUS → aroidpedia.com/all-genera

THE FOUR, IN BRIEF

One line for each.

Scindapsus — 35 accepted species of root-climbers from the eastern Himalaya to the Solomon Islands and Queensland, told from their look-alikes by the fruit: one ovule, ripening one large, kidney-shaped seed. All 35 species are in the archive, with 30 cultivars.

Syngonium — 43 accepted species of root-climbing vines from northeastern Mexico to Bolivia and Brazil, the only climbers in a tribe that otherwise keeps to the ground, with milky sap and finely netted veins. 42 species and 71 cultivars are in the archive.

Cyrtosperma — fifteen swamp and rainforest herbs of Malesia and the Pacific, the largest with spiny, mottled leaf stalks three meters tall. All fifteen species are in the archive.

Philodendron — 628 accepted species from northern Mexico to northeastern Argentina, the second-largest genus in the family. Estimates of its true size, undescribed species included, run from 700 to 1,500. Its first 70 records are in the archive, and more are on their way.

NEW IN THE ARCHIVE

SPECIES

Scindapsus

altissimus

Collected on New Guinea's Mamberamo River in 1920, from a stem that climbed to 40 meters; its spathe ran to half a meter.

EXPLORE RECORD →

SPECIES

Syngonium

hastiferum

In 2022 it became the first flowering plant known to be pollinated by a plant bug, drawn in by a scent molecule new to science.

EXPLORE RECORD →

SPECIES

Cyrtosperma
giganteum

Known for most of a century from two herbarium sheets; the first photographs of a living plant were printed in 2020.

EXPLORE RECORD →

CULTIVAR

Syngonium
podophyllum ‘White Butterfly’

Tissue culture turned this one clone into 22 named cultivars, several of them pink or red.

EXPLORE RECORD →

BROWSE THE ARCHIVE → aroidpedia.com/archive

NEW TO AROIDS?

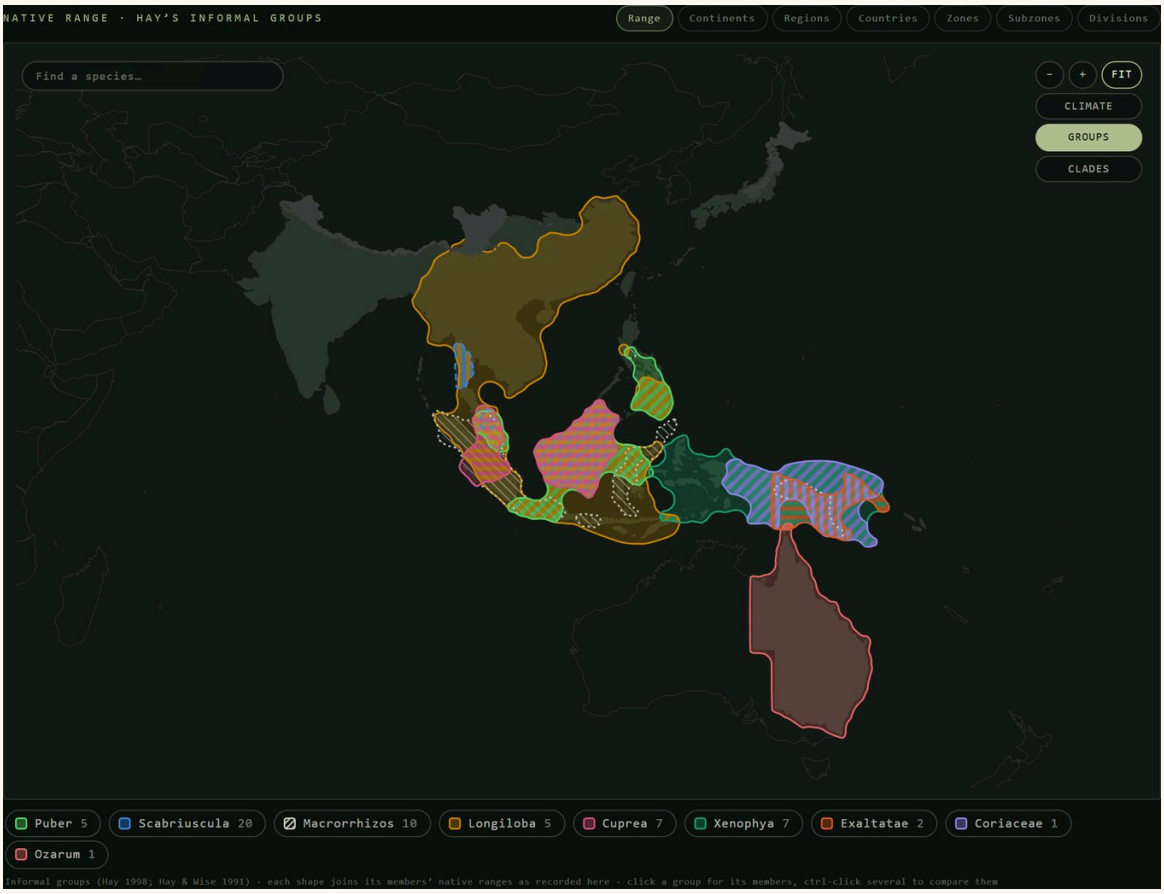
What is an aroid? Start here.

The Aroid Primer is a new front door to the Aroid Guide, made for anyone just starting out and told mostly in pictures: eight aroids you may already know, how the inflorescence works, the parts of the plant from seedling to adult, five ways aroids grow, how to read a plant's name, and the basics of their care.

START THE PRIMER → aroidpedia.com/aroid-primer

AROUND THE SITE

The groups inside a genus, on its map.



A genus map can now draw the groups inside the genus: Hay's informal groups and the clades of *Alocasia*, shown here, the subgenera of *Amorphophallus*, the sections and clades of *Monstera*, and the subgenera and clades of *Philodendron*. Click a group to see its members, or Ctrl- or Cmd-click several to see only the ground they share. Under Climate, the map now grays out ground too cold for the genus: for *Alocasia*, anywhere the coldest month's nights average below −5 °C (23 °F).

OPEN THE ALOCASIA MAP → aroidpedia.com/alocasia

A menu that searches as you type.

On a phone, the menu is now a field index: every genus with a page, with its count of records, and the rest of the site below. Start typing in its search bar and the menu turns into live results: genera, places and records, with or without their accents.

TRY IT ON YOUR PHONE → aroidpedia.com

Photographs from Graf's books.

Pictures from Alfred Byrd Graf's *Exotica*, *Tropica* and *Exotic Plants Illustrated* now sit in record galleries across the archive, each credited to its book, edition and page. They are the archive's only photographs of six *Syngonium* cultivars, among them 'Ruth Fraser' and 'Green Gold'.

WHERE THE ARCHIVE STANDS

Now 12 genera, and 983 records.

Every genus with a page of its own is counted below. The records so far: *Alocasia* (339), *Amorphophallus* (248), *Arum* (47), *Cyrtosperma* (15), *Monstera* (86), *Philodendron* (70, and arriving), *Scindapsus* (65) and *Syngonium* (113).

12	615	185	183
GENERA	SPECIES	CULTIVARS	HYBRIDS

THE COUNTS AS THIS ISSUE WENT OUT

EVERY GENUS ON THE MAP → THE FAMILY TREE →

A NAME WITH A PAST

Your “pothos” has a past.

Spend enough time around houseplants and “pothos” starts to sound like a growth habit: a vine with heart-shaped leaves, something silvery spilling from a hanging basket, a climber working its way up a moss pole. Yet *Epipremnum*, *Scindapsus* and *Philodendron* are three different genera, and there is a real genus called *Pothos*, to which none of those plants belongs. The muddle is much older than any plant-identification forum.

The four names of *Epipremnum aureum*, 1880 to 1964, beside the 1880 plate in *L’Illustration Horticole* 27, plate 381. The original plate, from the Missouri Botanical Garden’s copy in the Biodiversity Heritage Library, opens below.

VIEW THE 1880 PLATE →

In 1880, *L’Illustration Horticole* introduced a handsome climber with leaves splashed in gold. Across the foot of its color plate is the name *Pothos aurea*, standardized today as *Pothos aureus*, and anyone who has grown the golden vine would know it at a glance. It is *Epipremnum aureum*.

The real *Pothos* is far older. Linnaeus published the genus in 1753 with a single species, *Pothos scandens*, a plant *Hortus Malabaricus* had described and drawn in 1688 under a local name, Ana-parua. Heinrich Wilhelm Schott then spent a career on the distinctions hidden in the flowers: he established *Philodendron* in 1829, in a Viennese journal of art, literature, theater and fashion, *Scindapsus* in 1832, and *Epipremnum* in 1857. The golden vine’s true genus already existed when it was described as a *Pothos*.

Placing it there took most of the next century, because the evidence was in the flowers, and a houseplant is chosen for its leaves. Engler moved it to *Scindapsus* in 1908. In September 1961, a plant growing in a kerosene tin on Mrs. R. R. Sarathee’s third-floor veranda in Singapore came into flower, and C. X. Furtado described it in 1964. Even flowers did not settle it alone: Monroe Birdsey published the name *Rhaphidophora aurea* in 1963, and George Bunting *Epipremnum aureum* in 1964, a disagreement over where one genus ends and the next begins.

So the name on the nursery label is a fossil, the classification of 1880 kept in circulation long after botany set it aside. The plant sold as “golden pothos” is *Epipremnum aureum*; the one sold as “satin pothos” is *Scindapsus pictus*. Calling them pothos hides each of them behind a genus they do not belong to, and hides the real one too. *Epipremnum*, *Scindapsus* and *Philodendron* each have their own flowers, relatives and history, and they deserve their own names. So does *Pothos*, the genus that still bears the one they borrowed.

READ THE WHOLE STORY → aroidpedia.com/stories/your-pothos-has-a-past

◆

FROM THE EDITOR

Tell us what you grow.

If you grow any of this issue’s four genera, I would especially like to hear from you: photographs from your own growing, an observation from your bench or from the field, a plant with a history, a cross that worked or one that did not. Write to us, and we will build the page with you.

The next issue arrives on November 1st.

SEND US YOUR STORY → aroidpedia.com/contact-us

Robert Wainblat
EDITOR, AROIDPEDIA

The Spathe
No. 2 · October 2026 · sent October 10th, 2026
Read it online · Subscribe · spathe@aroidpedia.com