



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Syngonium podophyllum*¹

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Introduction

This rapidly-growing evergreen vine produces a multitude of variegated, bright green, arrow-shaped leaves on climbing and trailing stems (Fig. 1). If allowed to climb, *Nepthytis* develops large tropical leaves and wrist-thick stems. When kept from climbing, it quickly provides a green mat of six-inch high foliage, creating an excellent groundcover. It can become weedy, much the same as English ivy does, and will require regular trimming along the edges of the bed. It will also grow up into shrubs and look messy so it is best located in front of a shrub area, or out by itself in the landscape.

General Information

Scientific name: *Syngonium podophyllum*

Pronunciation: sin-GO-nee-um poe-doe-FILL-lum

Common name(s): Syngonium, Nephthytis

Family: *Araceae*

Plant type: ground cover; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; suitable for growing indoors; hanging basket; cascading down a wall

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

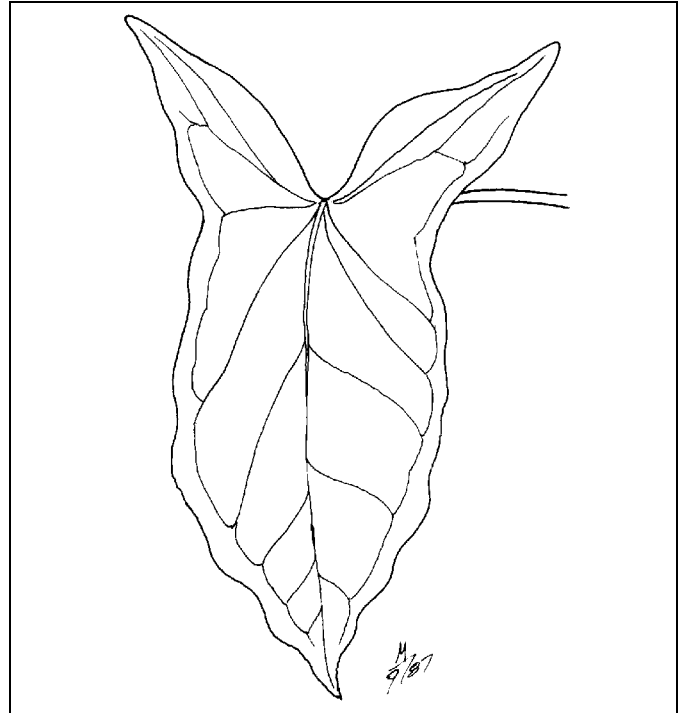


Figure 1. Syngonium.

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure

Spread: depends upon supporting structure

Plant habit: prostrate (flat)

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Foliage

- Leaf arrangement:** alternate
- Leaf type:** simple
- Leaf margin:** lobed
- Leaf shape:** saggitate (arrow)
- Leaf venation:** brachidodrome
- Leaf type and persistence:** evergreen
- Leaf blade length:** 4 to 8 inches; 8 to 12 inches
- Leaf color:** green
- Fall color:** no fall color change
- Fall characteristic:** not showy

Flower

- Flower color:** white
- Flower characteristic:** summer flowering

Fruit

- Fruit shape:** round
- Fruit length:** unknown
- Fruit cover:** fleshy
- Fruit color:** unknown
- Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

- Trunk/bark/branches:** not applicable
- Current year stem/twig color:** green
- Current year stem/twig thickness:** thick

Culture

- Light requirement:** plant grows in the shade
- Soil tolerances:** occasionally wet; acidic; slightly alkaline; clay; sand; loam
- Drought tolerance:** moderate
- Soil salt tolerances:** poor
- Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches

Other

- Roots:** not applicable
- Winter interest:** no special winter interest
- Outstanding plant:** not particularly outstanding
- Invasive potential:** aggressive, spreading plant

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Plant on 12 to 24-inch centers for a quick cover. Thriving in light to deep shade, *Nephtytis* prefers fertile, acid soil high in organic matter. Generous amounts of water and fertilizer will encourage running stems. Like ivy, stems have only a limited number of branches and complete cover of an area could take up to two years. Pruning is required along the edges of the groundcover mass to control growth. *Nephtytis* makes a fine hanging basket or container plant for indoors or outside.

'White Butterfly' is one of the most popular cultivars with leaf variegations, available in various shades of green, cream, and white.

Propagation is by seed or cuttings.

Mites, scale, and nematodes may be problems for *Nephtytis*.

Pests and Diseases

Nephtytis is susceptible to various disease organisms, affecting leaves, stems, and roots.