Syngonium podophyllum
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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, Nephthytis 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

Description

Height: depends upon supporting structure
Spread: depends upon supporting structure
Plant habit: prostrate (flat)
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Figure 1. Syngonium.
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, Nephthytis 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. Nephthytis 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 Nephthytis.

**Pests and Diseases**

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