# INDIAN SPECIES OF *ARISÆMA*

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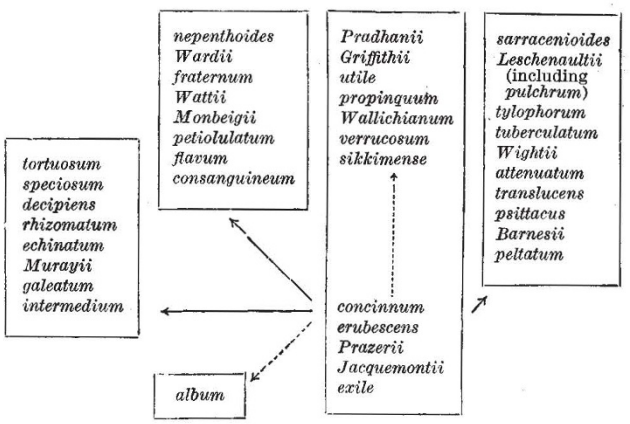
THE arum family (Araceæ) is well represented in tropical parts of the world, and, in India, genera like *Colocasia*, *Alocasia*, *Typhonium*, *Amorphophallus* and *Pothos* belonging to this family are commonly found. Some of these genera are associated with the hydrophytes and others form constituent plants of the secondary vegetation of the *'terai'* forests or the foothill vegetation of the Himalayas. The *'terai'* should be regarded ecologically as the real tropical rain forest. The arum family as a whole, therefore, comprises plants which are not found in high altitudes in India in places like Simla, Darjeeling or Sikkim. We are apt to think of plants like lofty *Magnolias*, *Cedrus*, *Quercus*, *Rhododendrons* and other plants like *Primulas*, *Gentianas* and *Senecios* when we imagine the vegetation at high altitudes in the Himalayas. An exception to this is the interesting and fascinating genus *Arisæma* belonging to the arum family. The species of this genus are always found in high hills and some reach altitudes of 15,000 ft. (5,000 m.) in the Sikkim Himalayas.

Some of the Himalayan *Arisæmas* are plants of great beauty, and their cultivation in gardens of temperate countries should open up a novel line to horticulture. The peculiar hood-like and deeply coloured spathe is the most attractive part of the plant, and species like *A. Pradhanii* (see accompanying figure), *A. Griffithii*, *A. utile*, *A. Wallichianum*, *A. sarracenioides* and *A. nepenthoides* should find a ready appeal to plant lovers. The coloration of the spathe of *A. Pradhanii* is described by Dr. Cromar-Watt of Aberdeen as follows: "When seen in sunshine the spathe looks more like some burnished metal than any vegetable production. A combination of velvety chocolate purple, chrysoprase green and pearly white with ribs of shining burnished copper in the inside." The plants flourish well in a cool greenhouse in a compost of rich loam, decayed leaf mould and sharp sand. They require plenty of moisture during the growing season, but afterwards they should be kept moderately dry and rested during the winter months.

Our knowledge of the Indian species has been enriched in recent years by some fine collections made in the South Indian hills by the late Prof. E. Barnes of Madras. Although Prof. Barnes was a chemist and had been teaching chemistry in India, his casual interest in plant collections has resulted in the discovery of eight new species of *Arisæma*. It is now possible in view of ampler materials to study the group and the interrelationship of the species. Hitherto, no one has attempted to arrange the Indian species in natural groups excepting perhaps Engler ("Pflanzenreich—Araceæ", 1920). Unfortunately, Engler's first group, *Fimbriata*, does not seem to contain plants with a simple spathe and appendix. Besides, there are fourteen other groups, and although some of them contain plants of natural alliance the interrelationship of the groups are somewhat obscured by sorting some one hundred species into fifteen groups. The Indian species should have a basic plexus in plants like *A. exile* and *A. Jacquemontii* and not in *A. alba* of the *Fimbriata* group as proposed by Engler. I have attempted a simpler

arrangement, and the species have been sorted in four main groups. The linear development from the basic species *A. exile* ends in *A. Griffithii* and *A. Pradhanii*. A parallel development is indicated in south India and the line must have separated from the main phase early in the evolutionary history. Besides these, there are two other smaller developments in northern India ending with species like *A. tortuosum* and *A. nepenthoides*. The general plan of *Arisæma* may be outlined as shown below:




A detailed account of the Indian *Arisæmas* has been prepared and will be published elsewhere.

# ASSOCIATION OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION BUREAUX

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

THE twenty-first annual Conference of the Association of Special Libraries and Information Bureaux was held at the Polytechnic, Regent Street, London, during September 13–15, while less well attended than the previous conference and possessing the advantage of a single venue, was scarcely so successful in providing the opportunities for informal discussion and contacts, apart from the conversazione with which the Conference opened. This was again