

# American skunk-cabbage

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information



## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Lysichiton americanus*

**AKA:** Western Skunk-cabbage

**Native to:** Western North America

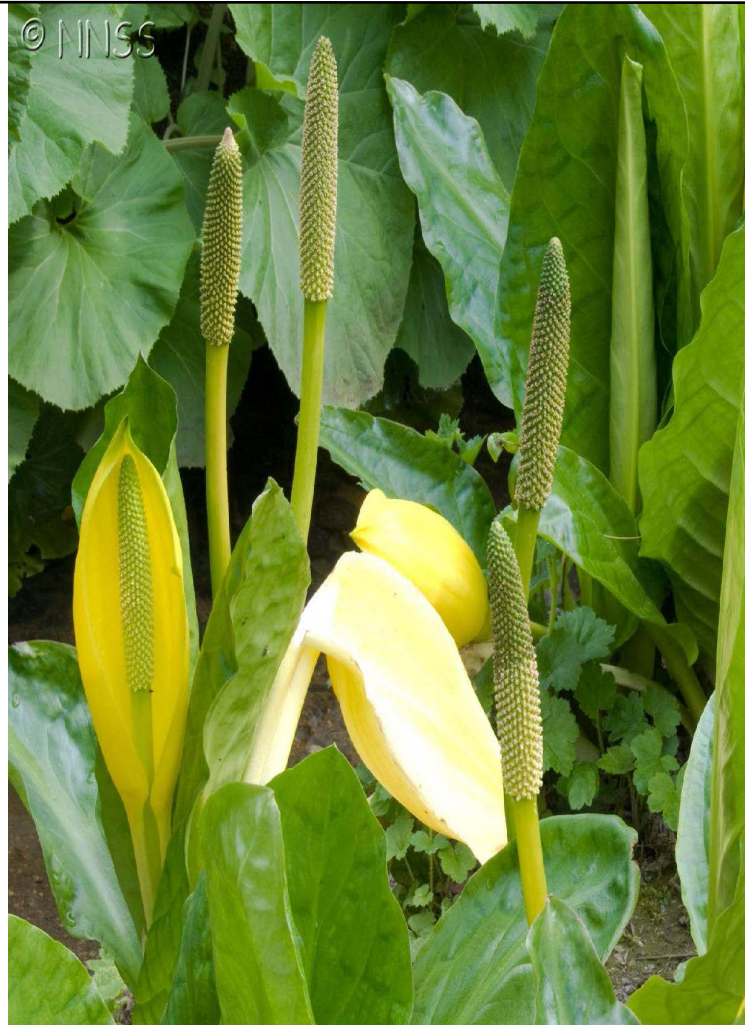
**Habitat:** Wet woodland, streamsides, muddy pond margins

Yellow flowers are produced in spring (late March to May) that resemble those of wild arum (lords-and-ladies). They emit a strong odour like that of a skunk. The plant has a basal rosette of stemmed leathery leaves, usually up to about 70cm long. It is a tall herb growing up to 1.5m in height. Green berries are produced in the summer.

American skunk-cabbage needs a wet site but has no specific soil requirements - it can occur in soils from light sand to heavy clay that are acid, neutral or alkaline. It is a hardy perennial lowland plant, but can grow at altitudes of up to 1400m. Seeds may be dispersed via waterways but also probably by birds and mammals, as occurs in the native range.

American skunk-cabbage is able to form dense stands and may negatively impact on some native plants, out-competing them by shadowing.

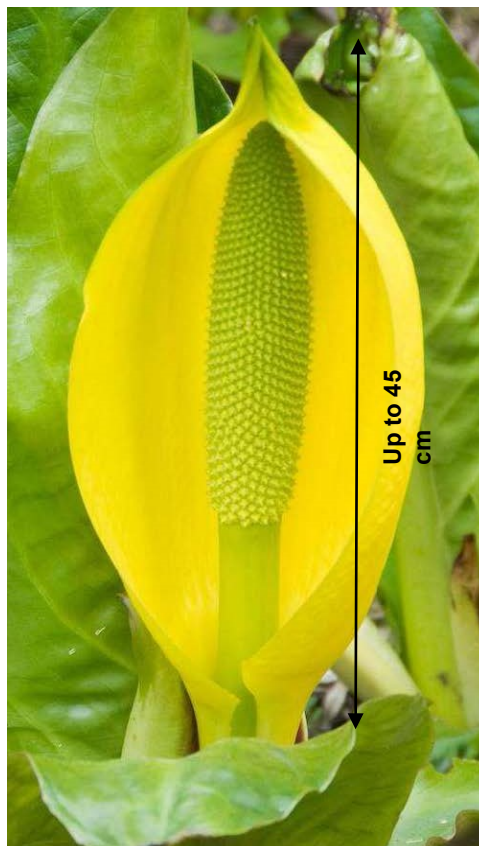
**Under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order (Northern Ireland) 2019 it is offence to intentionally keep; grow or cultivate; transport to, from or within Northern Ireland, use or exchange American skunk cabbage; or to release it into the environment.**



## Key ID Features



1 or 2 (sometimes up to 4)  
bright yellow spathes (look  
like large petals)



Bright green leathery  
leaves with light sheen



Rosette of  
leaves at base  
of plant

Leaves 40-70 cm long (sometimes up to 1.5m)

**Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>, iRecord app or Invasive Species Northern Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesni.co.uk/report-sighting>**



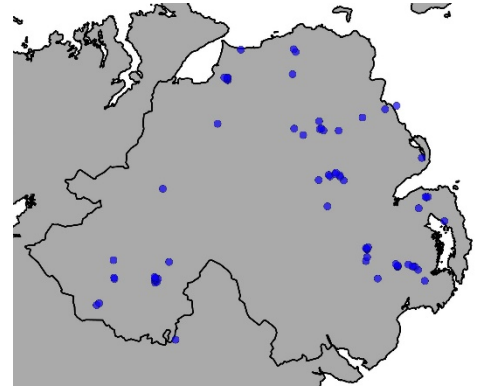
## Identification throughout the year

Most easily identified when in flower (late March to May). When not in flower large cabbage-like leaves, often on swamp mud, may be used for identification.



## Distribution

Widespread but not generally common. Its normal habitat is wet woodland.

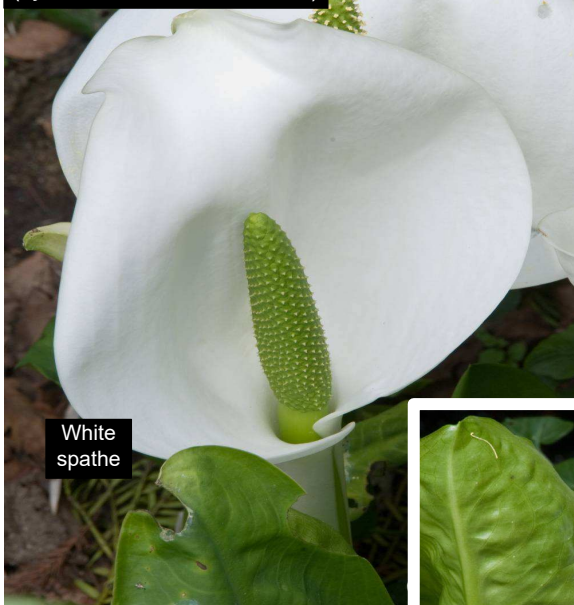


Source: NBN atlas Northern Ireland - <https://northernireland-species.nbnatlas.org/species/NHMSYS0000460540>  
Check website for current distribution.

## Similar Species

### Asian skunk-cabbage

Non-native  
(*Lysichiton camtschatcensis*)



White spathe

Very similar plant but slightly smaller. Occurs in similar habitats. Hybrids between American and Asian skunk cabbages can occur.

Flowers more or less scentless



### Lords-and-ladies

Native  
(*Arum maculatum*)

Green spathe

Purple spadix

Up to 25cm

Arrow-shaped leaves often with dark spots

Smaller than American skunk-cabbage

### References and further reading:

Blamey, M, Fitter, R and Fitter, A (2003) "*The Wild Flowers of Britain and Ireland. The Complete Guide to the British and Irish Flora*" A & C Black, London  
Preston, C D, Pearman, D A and Dines, T A (editors) (2002) "*New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora*". Oxford University Press  
Stace, C (1999) "*Field Flora of the British Isles*". Cambridge University Press  
Photos from: Sannse, RPS and GBNNSS.

*Sustainability at the heart of a living, working, active landscape valued by everyone.*

Adapted for Northern Ireland  
Environment Agency 2020