

Philodendrons for Central Florida

The genus *Philodendron* contains several hundred species of herbaceous plants, which are native to Central and South America, and belongs to the Aroid Family or Araceae. Many of these grow as vines but others are epiphytes or are “self-heading”, meaning that they grow on upright stems and do not need support. In Latin, *Philodendron* means “tree-loving”. Several *Philodendrons* are commonly grown as houseplants but many are suited for the landscape in tropical and subtropical climates. There are even some that can be grown outdoors in Central Florida.

Perhaps the most common *Philodendron* grown in Florida landscapes is *Philodendron bipinnatifidum* or Selloum. It was formerly known as

grows on a trunk 6 to 8 feet tall. The trunk can be upright but often the trunk leans or creeps along the ground. Long, rope-like roots grow from the trunk and help provide support. It has large leaves that are deeply lobed and dark green in color. It bears large, white inflorescences during the summer. These are produced on short stalks amongst the foliage. Selloum grows in sun or shade. This is a great plant for creating a tropical atmosphere in Central Florida. A compact cultivar of Selloum is available. ‘Hope’ has smaller leaves and only grows to about 3 feet tall.



Monstera deliciosa fruit

Philodendron selloum but this species and several others including *P. lundii* and *P. mello-barretoanum* have been reduced to synonyms of *P. bipinnatifidum*. Selloum is a self-heading species that

available at nurseries. A hybrid between *P. speciosum* and *P. bipinnatifidum* is sometimes seen in local landscapes but is rarely sold. This plant is *Philodendron x evansii*. This is a very ornamental plant

Another self-heading *Philodendron* is *Philodendron speciosum*. It is similar to *P. bipinnatifidum* but the leaves are not lobed; they are entire with toothed margins. It bears an inflorescence with a white spadix and surrounded by a pink spathe. This plant is fairly rare and not commonly

with large, lobed leaves but not as deeply divided as *P. bipinnatifidum*. It bears a colorful inflorescence that is white with pinkish edges. *Philodendron* ‘Xanadu’ is a small, self-heading plant that is great for small landscapes. It only grows 2 to 3 feet tall with a slender stem. The narrow leaves are shallowly lobed and are only 6 to 12 inches in length. It will grow in sun or shade. *Philodendron* ‘Xanadu’ is easily found in local nurseries. *Philodendron bipennifolium* has lobed leaves similar to *P. bipinnatifidum*, Selloum, but not as large or dark green in color. The upright stems can grow 2 to 3 feet tall. Several other self-heading species exist but are rare and can be difficult to locate. *Philodendron eichleri* and *Philodendron undulatum* both have large, undivided leaves. *Philodendron stenolobum* is usually misidentified as *P. williamsii*. It has narrow, wavy leaves that can get 2 to 3 feet in length and grows a slender trunk several feet tall. *Philodendron goeldii* has divided leaves that resemble those of a *Schefflera*. *Philodendron* ‘Soledad’ is an unknown hybrid that resembles *P. x evansii*. *Philodendron corcovadense* is a small species growing 3 to 4 feet tall. It has



small, undivided leaves that are arrowhead shaped.

There are also some climbing species of *Philodendron* that can be used in Central Florida. These plants like a moist, shady location and will climb the trunk of a tree or palm. *Philodendron scandens* ssp. *oxycardium*, the Heart-leaf Philodendron, is one of the most commonly grown houseplants. It has small, heart-shaped leaves and grows very flat against a tree trunk. 'Brasil' is a cultivar with variegated leaves. *Philodendron erubescens*, the Red-leaf Philodendron, has triangular leaves that are green and glossy and have a red tint on the undersides. The stems and leaf stems are reddish-purple. *Philodendron radiatum* has deeply lobed leaves up to a foot in length. *Philodendron x wilsonii* is a large climber with lobed leaves. These leaves can be 2 to 3 feet in length.

In addition to the climbing *Philodendrons*, there are some other vining aroids that can be grown in Central Florida and resemble *Philodendron*. *Monstera deliciosa*, Ceriman, is a large climber with leaves 2-3 feet long. These leaves are deeply lobed and also have circular perforations

Epipremnum aureum

in them. It also bears a large, white inflorescence during the warmer months. This will mature into a cone-like fruit. This fruit is edible but only when fully ripe as it contains stinging crystals that can irritate the mouth and throat. It usually takes over a year for this fruit to reach maturity. This plant is often incorrectly called Split-Leaf Philodendron. *Monstera adansonii* and *Monstera friedrichstablii* are similar but with much smaller leaves, less than a foot long. They are fast growing vines but do not develop an edible fruit.

Epipremnum aureum, Pothos Vine, is a common houseplant and is also commonly seen in landscapes in the southern half of Florida. When grown in a pot, it has small, green, heart-shaped leaves marked with yellow. If it is planted out, it will climb a tree and develop large, divided leaves up to 2 feet in length. The cultivar 'Emerald Queen' has pure green leaves and 'Marble Queen' has green leaves with white variegation. *Epipremnum pinnatum* has dark green, divided leaves up to a foot in length. These other climbing aroids all like a shady location with moist soil.

— Eric Schmidt
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▲ *Philodendron 'Xanadu'*



▲ *Philodendron speciosum inflorescence*



▲ *Philodendron corcovadense*