



This project is made possible by a grant from the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council—Kathy Craddock Burks

education grant.

Please visit their website at www.fleppc.org for information about exotic plants in Florida.

The Air Potato Exchange project is the cooperative effort of many agencies.

Brought to you by:

- *Highlands Soil & Water Conservation District*
- *FLPPC Kathy Craddock Burk's education grant*
- *Highlands County Extension Office*
- *Master Gardeners*
- *Hidden Oaks Nursery*
- *Highlands Hammock State Park*
- *WVOJ*

Watch for workshops on invasive exotic plants coming soon.

Native plants provided by Hidden Oaks Nursery from funds provided by a grant through the Florida Exotic Pest Plant Council.



Our Mission:
To provide leadership to help people conserve, improve and sustain the natural resources and environment of Highlands County.

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www.highlandsswcd.org

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD!

Air Potato in Florida



Air potato, *Dioscorea bulbifera*, a native of Asia, was first introduced to Florida in 1905. Due to its ability to displace native species and disrupt natural processes such as fire and water flow, air potato has been listed as one of Florida's most invasive plant species since 1993, and was placed on the Florida Noxious Weed List by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services in 1999.

Tame your exotic side: become native

Get Involved—be part of the solution:

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Air Potato Exchange Day

When: January 9, 2010
10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

Where: Bert J. Harris, Jr. Agricultural Center Sebring, Florida

The Highlands Soil and Water Conservation District will host the “Air Potato Exchange Day”. All you have to do is bring in some air potato bulbils (at least one grocery bag full) to the Agricultural Center in Sebring, and receive a free native plant.

Also, prizes will be awarded for:

- The biggest air potato
- The most air potatoes (pounds)
- The smallest air potato
- The most uniquely shaped air potato



How to recognize Air Potato

Air Potato is a twining herbaceous vine which arises from an underground tuber. Stems can grow as long as 60 feet in length. The vines are round and slightly angled in cross section. Aerial tubers form in leaf axils. There appear to be two types of air potato bulbils in Florida; most are dark coffee colored and warty, but some plants produce light tan bulbils with smoother skin. The leaves are attached to the stem with long leaf stalks and are alternately arranged along the stem. The leaves can be 8 inches or more long, and are nearly as wide. The leaves are heart shaped, basally lobed and quickly taper to a point at the leaf tip. All leaf veins arise from the point at which the leaf meets the petiole. Flowers are small, fragrant and arise from leaf axils and loose clusters up to 4 inches long. Male and female flowers are found on separate air potato plants.

The Problem

Air potato invades a variety of natural areas in Florida including pinelands and hammocks. It rapidly grows to the tops of tree canopies and forms a vine mat which weighs down and shades native vegetation. Once air potato invades an area, it is difficult to eliminate due to the prolific production of aerial tubers.



Air potato can grow extremely quickly, roughly 8 inches per day. New plants develop from bulbils that form on the plant, and these bulbils serve as a means of dispersal. The aerial stems of air potato die back in winter, but resprouting occurs from bulbils and underground tubers. The primary means of spread and reproduction are via bulbils. The smallest bulbils make control of air potato difficult due to their ability to sprout at a very small stage.

For information on how to treat Air Potato, visit <http://aquat1.ifas.ufl.edu/node/133> or <http://www.invasive.org/library/FLFSNoxWeeds/airpotato.html>