

# Black Runner Elephant Ear (Colocasia esculenta) Planting and Growing Instructions

Your Black Runner Elephant ear plants may have GREEN stems. This is because they have been growing in full shade. As they are exposed to sunlight, the stems, as well as the leaves (which will emerge green) will darken to the purple/black color.

On Large or Xtra Large plants, the leaves have been cut off your plant for shipping, because I have found that they actually recover from shipping (or any time they are dug up and transplanted) if those large leaves they have are removed. New leaves will start to grow quickly as soon as the plant is re-established in its new home.

On Medium or Small plants, some leaves may be left on your plants, however most will be removed for shipping as this puts less stress on the plant since it isn't trying to support all those leaves during shipping and transplant.

Your elephant ear plant has been through a lot of stress the last couple of days. To help it recover, I suggest planting it in a pot that can be kept in a warm and shady location for a few days. The thing your plant really wants is a LOT OF WATER to help it get over the transplanting and long, dry trip. I would plant in a rich, water-retaining potting mix and set the whole pot in a pan of water for a few hours in a **WARM PLACE** the **FULL shade**. Don't plant too deep, you should be able to see the original soil line by the color of the stalks – darker above the soil line and lighter below. Planting too deep can suffocate the plant, better a little too shallow, if you're not sure. Be sure to cover the roots completely.



The red line indicates the maximum planting depth on these Black Runner Elephant ears

The stem is lighter below the original soil line; darker above.

After the initial soaking, keep the soil damp, but not soggy, for the next week or so and keep in a **WARM PLACE IN FULL SHADE**, allowing the plant to recover from the trip. New leaves should begin to emerge from the base within 7-10 days but these new leaves are very tender and may get burnt in full sun (especially if there are no larger leaves to help shade them when they first emerge). As the leaves begin to emerge, gradually adjust them to the sun over a few days, then the plants can be planted out in their final destination in your garden or yard.

When the temperatures warm sufficiently (they prefer HEAT – but definitely don't set out until all chance of frost is past – it would be preferable to wait until you have LOWS no lower than 60°F) and **your plant has recovered from the transplanting/shipping and has been acclimatized to the sun**, you can plant your elephant ear in the ground if you desire. The more sunlight it gets, the darker black the leaves will become; the more shade, the longer the new leaves will stay green with black veins; but they will eventually turn black even in partial/bright shade. Water liberally – these plants love water, but they don't need to be in a bog or pond to survive. I grow mine in average, sandy soil with just average water. Of course, you can keep it as a container plant all year long – keep in a bright location to get the new leaves to turn black.

Your 'Runner' will multiply by sending out purple/black runners across the ground during the warm summer months. Every few inches the runner will drop down roots and send up leaves forming a new plant. Then the process will repeat with the new plant sending out its own runners, soon you'll have a 'spider web' of runners and lots of new plants! If you want to share your new plants, let them get at least 12" high and cut the runner – leave the plant in place and water well for a few days or until the plant is not wilted, then you can dig it up and share or move it to a new location. Trimming most of the leaves off the plants when you transplant them (like they were when you got your plants), will actually allow them to recover faster than transplanting with the leaves on. If you're growing your plant in a container, you can set another small container under the runner where the new plant is growing for it to root into or try to curl the runner around so that it stays within the pot your mother plant is in.

These plants are reported hardy in zones 8 (with deep mulch) and warmer; plants may be lifted in the winter in colder zones and kept in containers in a greenhouse or other area that stays above freezing. If you are keeping your plant in a cool area (rather than a warm greenhouse) for the winter, water sparingly during this time. Of course, they make wonderful container plants all year in any zone! The larger the container and more moisture they receive will determine their size - up to 5' high with 2' leaves.