

American skunk cabbage

Lysichiton americanus

Invasive: Medium impact

Species profile

- Habitat:** Terrestrial. Needs wet areas.
- Distribution in Ireland:** Sparse distribution but locally abundant in some places.
- Status:** Established.
- Family name:** Araceae.
- Reproduction:** Male and female (sometimes hermaphrodite) flowers can occur within the same distinctive inflorescence which consists of a spathe and spadix. Pollination is carried out by beetles in North America.

Identifying features

- Colour:** Large green leaf surrounds a yellow spathe within which is a green/yellow spadix (a spike of inflorescence).
- Smell:** As the name suggests, the plant emits a foul smelling odour when damaged/crushed or when dying back.
- Size:** Can grow up to 1.5 metres.



American skunk cabbage plants at almost full height - C. O' Flynn



Size of American skunk cabbage spike and spadex against hand - C. O'Flynn



Emerging leaf of American skunk cabbage - Shutterstock



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Threats

Forms dense stands which can shade out native species.

Its preference for wet soils means that the seed can easily be dispersed via waterbodies.

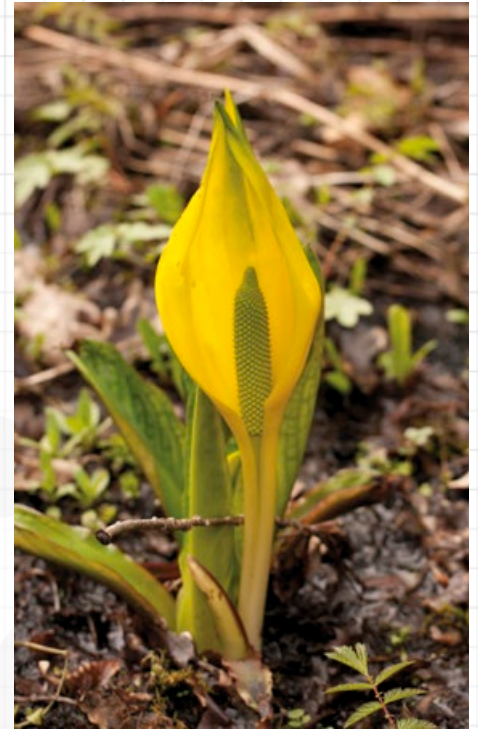
Seasonal variations

Winter – Spring: Late flowering plant.

Summer – Autumn: Green berries ripen in July and August.

Similar species

Shape of the flower could be confused with native *Arum maculatum*, but *Arum maculatum* has a smaller spathe and differs in colour from bright yellow spathes of *Lysichiton americanus*.



American skunk cabbage showing the spathe covering the spadix - Shutterstock



Planted American skunk cabbage, notice how the spadex outgrows the spathe which once shielded it - Shutterstock



Arum maculatum is native to Ireland which has a spadex protruding from a spathe L.Lysaght

