Monstera deliciosa

Common name: Swiss Cheese Plant, Split-leaf Philodendron Family: Araceae Habit: Shrub Location: Botanical Garden

Distribution: It is native to tropical forests of southern Mexico, south to Panama. It has been introduced to many tropical areas, and has become a mildly invasive species in Hawaii, Seychelles, Ascension Island and the Society Islands. It is very widely grown in temperate zones as a houseplant.

Description:

It is a hemiepiphyte with aerial roots. It is able to grow up to 20 m high in the wild, with large, leathery, glossy, pinnate, heart-shaped leaves 25–90 cm long by 25–75 cm broad. The leaves on young plants are smaller and entire with no lobes or holes, but soon produce lobed and fenestrate leaves as they grow. Although it can grow very tall in nature, it only measures between 2 and 3 m when grown indoors. The older the plant, the more the leaves are covered with its familiar large perforations. Wild seedlings grow towards the darkest area they can grow until they find a tree trunk, then start to grow up towards the light, creeping up the tree. The inflorescence is adorned with a cream-white spathe of uniform, velvety appearance, covering, like a hood, a yellowish white spadix 10 to 15 cm high and about 3 cm in diameter. Flowers are self-pollinating, containing both androecium and gynoecium. Since they contain both structures, this plant is able to self-pollinate.

Uses:

Monstera deliciosa is commonly grown outdoors as an ornamental plant in the tropics and subtropics as an air purifying plant. The aerial roots have been used as ropes in Peru, and to make baskets in Mexico. In Martinique, the root is used to make a remedy for snakebites. In Mexico, it is used in the relief of arthritis symptoms. The fruit is nutrient-rich and contains vitamin C, vitamin B, phosphorous, potassium, and some proteins. Plants with broad leaves and plenty of them, like monsteras, make excellent sound barriers because their surfaces can absorb sound vibrations, reducing noise.

