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LATIN NAME: *Lysichitum americanum* Hulten & St. John (287-676)

- Greek 'Lysichitum' = Loose + tunic (reference to spathe) (1-3)

OTHER LATIN NAMES: *Lysichiton* (*Lysichitum*) *kamtschatkense* (342-281); *Lysichitum camtschatcense* (L.) Schott. (46-22, 335-5);

COMMON NAMES: Skunk Cabbage, Yellow Skunk Cabbage (1-3); Yellow Arum (44-70); *ka'ilet* (Cowlitz, whole plant), *dipdi'p* (Cowlitz, seed stalk), *stco'qwe* (Klallam), *tibu't* (Makah), *t'o'qua* (Quileute, "it smells", whole plant), *t'o'qua'ake'itsa* (Quileute, seed stalk), *t'o'qua'a'tsuboki* (Quileute, root), *tsule'los* (Quinault, "digging the roots"), *t'ca'uk'* (Samish), *t'cu'k* (Swinomish, 46-22); *W'NAK*, *W'NAG* (Coast Tsimshian, 243-111); *HU-tl* (232-71); *lhgun* (Haida [S]), *ukw'uk'* (Bella Coola, 148-48); *k'a7ukw'i* (Plant), *k'ik'a7ukw'a* (Leaves, Southern Kwakiutl, 150-271); Indian Wax Paper (150-271);

PLANT DESCRIPTION:

GENERAL: Perennial herbs with short, fleshy, upright underground stems. Glaucous, mephitic, acaulescent. (287-676) Plant acaulescent, with stout, erect rhizome; (342-281) Entire plant has strong skunklike odor. (342-281) Tropical-looking swamp plant, Yellow spathes appear as early as February & March (Lee) in Prince Rupert area; A perennial herb, with thick, fleshy rootstocks (44-70); The skunk-like odour of this plant resembles that of the closely related '*Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Nutt.' of eastern North America. (44-70); Herb with large, bluish green, oval leaves. Stem barely visible, short and fleshy. Thick, horizontal rootstock form dominant understory patches. (385-37);

LEAVES: Large and simple leaves. Leaves lanceolate to oblong-ovate, mostly 4-10 dm. (287-676) Leaves large, up to 1 meter long, oblong to elliptic, glabrous, in basal cluster; spathe nearly sessile, yellow, appearing before leaves. (342-281) The fleshy oval leaves emerge from the mud, ultimately to form huge fans. (1-3); Large, oval-shaped, clustered leaves, mostly 4 to 10 dm (15-40 inch) long, bright green, and waxy. (40-70);

FLOWERS: Flowers all perfect, on a fleshy spadix 4-10 X 1-2 cm, the spathe large, white or yellowish; perianth 4-lobed; stamens 4; ovary 2-celled, 2-4 ovuled; stigma capitate, sessile; Spathe yellow, up to 2 dm; flowers greenish-yellow; flowers baccate 1-2 seeded; (287-676) Spadix cylindrical, green in fruit. (342-281) The spathe unfolds to reveal the spadix, a thick stalk bearing hundreds of small greenish flowers; "Flowers"

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appear in early spring, consisting of a yellow sheath, up to 2 dm (8 inch) long, surrounding a club-like yellowish-green flower stalk. (44-70); Blooms from February to June in swampy ground along the Pacific coast from Alaska south through British Columbia to northern California, east to Montana (140-17); Inflorescence a spadix partly enclosed by a large yellow green spathe, with a foul-smelling, skunklike odor. Many small, bisexual flowers crowded on the spadix. Perianth 4-parted, greenish yellow (385-37). Flowering: before leaf growth, March-June. (385-37);

FRUITS/SEEDS: Flowers baccate, 1-2 seeded. (287-676) At maturity the flower stalk breaks apart to reveal brown oval seeds embedded in a white pulpy tissue. (44-70); Fruit berrylike, pulpy, 1- or 2-seeded. Fruiting: July-September (385-37);

HABITAT: Swampy areas. (287-676); In swampy ground, especially black mucky soil, beneath alder (*Alnus rubra*) and confiers; rarely flowers in dense shade. (44-70); Often dominant in open swamps and wet woods, prefers boggy sites.(385-37);

RANGE: Alaska to California, east (but less common) to Montana and Idaho. (287-676); Common in coastal forests, Vancouver Island to Alaska, and east to the Columbia River, but not in arid or semi-arid areas (44-70); The range is from the Santa Cruz Mountains, California, north along the Pacific coast to Alaska, east to Montana and Idaho (385-37); extends as far north as 54°N. latitude in the eastern part of the Province (103-65);

SOME SIMULAR SPECIES:

1. *Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Nutt.: (369-238)

- 1980 Dr. Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal, 176. "The Skunk Cabbage is a very curious plant, the only one of the genus to which it belongs." (139-176)

OTHER LATIN NAMES: *Spathyema foetida* (139-176, 408-118); *Ictodes*, *Pothos*, *Arum*, *Dracontium* (272-269);

COMMON NAMES: Skunk Cabbage, Skunk Weed, Pole Cat Weed, Meadow Cabbage, Swamp Cabbage (139-176); Foetid Hellebore (369-238); Elephant-ears (4-254); Clumpfoot cabbage, collard, Midas' ears, pockweed, polecat weed, parson-in-the-pillary, stinking poke (408-118); Foetid hellebore (369-238); o'se'do'

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(Iroquois [Mo.]), unra'dowa'nes-gano" sagras (Iroquois [Ca.]), naigwai"igas (Iroquois[Se.], 435-2204); tabac due diable, chou puant, sikag-buk (Ojibwa [Chippewa], 435-2248);

DESCRIPTION: The root is perennial, large, abrupt, and furnished with numerous fleshy fibers, which penetrate to the depth of 2 feet or more. The spathe, which appears before the leaves, is ovate, acuminate, obliquely depressed at the apex, auriculated at the base, folded inward at the edges, and of a brownish-purple color, varied with spots of red, yellow, and green. Within the spathe, the flowers, which resemble it in color, are placed in great numbers upon a globose, peduncled spadix, for which they form a compact covering. After the spathe had decayed, the spadix continues to grow, and when the fruit is mature, has attained a size exceeding by several fold its original dimensions. The different parts of the flower, with the exception of the anthers, augment in like proportion. At the base of each style is a roundish seed, immersed in the spadix, about the size of a pea, and speckled with purple and yellow. The leaves, which rise from the ground after the flowers, are numerous and crowded, oblong, cordate, acute, smooth, strongly veined, and attached to the root by long petioles, which are hollowed in front, and furnished with colored sheathing stipules. At the beginning of May, when the leaves are fully developed, they are very large, being from 1 to 2 feet in length, and from 9 inches to 1 foot in breadth. (139-176); The reddish color of the plant resembles meat and helps to attract carrion flies, as does the wretched odor (139-176); The flowers are numerous, of a dull purple within the spathe, on a short, oval spadix. Calyx consists of four fleshy, wedge-shaped petals; corolla, none; stamens 4, seeds round and fleshy, and about as large as a pea (124-116);

- 1983 Laura C. Martin, Wildflower Folklore, 76. "Symplocarpus foetidus: As the plant grows it produces heat. Temperatures within the buds of the plant have been recorded to be 27 degrees F. warmer than the temperature of the outside air. This heat not only helps protect the bud from very cold weather, but also intensifies the odor and thus helps to draw more pollinators." (399-78)

- 1985 Harry R. Phillips, Growing & Propagating Wild Flowers, 57. "Skunk Cabbage requires the whole of the growing season to mature its seeds. The rounded seeds, 1/3 inch (8 mm) long at maturity, are embedded in the spadix, which can expand to 4 inches across by October. The fruiting spadix darkens and takes on a soft spongy texture as it develops. It resembles a blackjack and can frequently be found on the ground after the foliage has gone." (340-58)

HABITAT: The plant is indigenous, growing abundantly in meadows, swamps, and other wet places, throughout the whole northern and middle sections of this country. (139-176); in swamps and boggy land

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(272-269).

RANGE: Grows in Quebec, to Manitoba, south to West North Carolina, Northern Georgia, and Tennessee (127-35); Native to the United States and is also found in Asia (215-251); North-eastern North American native; also in north-east Asia (272-269); N.B., N.S., Que., Ont., Southeast Manitoba, south to Iowa, Tennessee, and Georgia, and in east Asia (369-238);

CLASSIFICATION:

CLASS: Angiospermae (118-10)

SUBCLASS: Monocotyledons (118-15)

SUPERORDER: Arecidae (118-15)

ORDER: Arales (118-15)

FAMILY: Araceae (Arum or Calla-lily, the Aroids)

- 1972 Frances Perry, Flowers of the World, 32. "115 genera and 2000 species, 92 percent tropical." (244-32)

- 1978 V.H. Heywood, Flowering Plants of the World, 307. "About 110 genera and about 2000 species." (118-307)

- 1978 V.H. Heywood, Flowering Plants of the World, 307. "The Araceae (the aroids) is a large family of mostly herbaceous plants, with great variety in vegetative habit. In the main they are herbaceous with aerial stems or underground tubers or rhizomes, but there are a few woody members. The family includes a number of climbers and epiphytes as well as a floating water plant (*Pistia*). " (118-309)

- 1978 V.H. Heywood, Flowering Plants of the World, 309. "Many members contain a watery or milky sap (latex) and raphides (calcium oxalate crystals)." (118-309)

- 1978 V.H. Heywood, Flowering Plants of the World, 309. "Economically the family is of considerable importance, as the edible aroids of the genera *Colocasia*, *Xanthosoma*, *Alocasia*, *Amorphophallus* and

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Cyrtosperma are grown throughout the tropics and subtropics, where their starchy swollen tuberous corms are cultivated primarily as a subsistence food. However, the growing of *Colocasia* (taro, dasheen, eddo, cocoyam) and *Xanthosoma* (tanier, yautia) in some countries has reached a commercial scale. The taro or dasheen (*Colocasia esculenta*) is of Asian origin and consists of many varieties, some of which are adopted to upland and well-drained areas and others to lowland flooded conditions. The corms contain crystals of calcium oxalate which have to be destroyed by boiling or baking. The starch grains are small and easily digested, thus making it a suitable food for infants and invalids. Tanier (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*, *X. atrovirens*, *X. violaceum*), of South American origin, is closely related to *Colocasia* but most varieties produce larger corms with coarse starch grains. The major food species of the other genera are *Alocasia indica* and *A. macrorrhiza*, *Amorphophallus campanulatus* and *Cyrtosperma chamissonis*, all of which are to be found mainly in Indonesia and the Pacific islands. The inflorescence of *Monstera* is sometimes used as food." (118-309)

- 1982 Dr. Rudolf W. Becking, Pocket Flora of the Redwood Forest, 37. "About 105 genera and 1500 species, mostly tropical, a few in temperate zones." (385-37)

SUB-FAMILY:

TRIBE:

GENUS: *Lysichitum*

- 1963 Graighead & Davis, A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers, 12. "There is a difference of opinion whether there are 1 or 2 species of *Lysichitum* in the world. Some botanists believe our plant is the same species as the one found on eastern coast of Russia (*L. kamtschatcensis*); others claim that these are 2 distinct species." (6-12)

- 1972 Frances Perry, Flowers of the World, 33. "Two splendid bog plants are the *Lysichitums*, the yellow-flowered '*Lysichitum americanum*' from Western North America and its white counterpart '*L. camtschatcense*' from Japan, Kamchatka, the Sakhalin Isles and Eastern Siberia." (244-34)

- 1976 Lewis J. Clark, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest, 3. "Authorities are divided whether there is an Asiatic and an American species, or only one." (1-3)

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PLANT USES

TOXICITY:

- 1965 John M. Kingsbury, Deadly Harvest, 103. "Some plants contain crystals of calcium oxalate which, if eaten, remain largely undissolved during passage through the digestive tract and are excreted. Being unabsorbed by the blood stream, they cannot produce oxalate poisoning.....But crystals of calcium oxalate cause trouble of another kind as anyone who has bitten into the root of a jack-in-the-pulpit plant or dumbcane can testify. The sharp-pointed oxalate crystals in the plants, even though microscopic in size, penetrate the tender tissues of the mouth and tongue. The intense burning which results is probably due in part to mechanical, and in part to chemical, irritation." (16-103)
- 1965 John M. Kingsbury, Deadly Harvest, 103. "Some think practical jokes with these plants are funny, but the truth is that more than one person has lost his life when tissues about the back of the tongue swelled up and blocked breathing as a result of taking a mouthful." (16-103)
- 1975 Nancy J. Turner, Food Plants of British Columbia Indians, Part 1/Coastal Peoples, 72. "Skunk cabbage (*Lysichitum americanum*), like many other members of the Arum Family, contains long, sharp crystals of calcium oxalate, which, if taken into the mouth, become embedded in the mucous membranes and provoke intense irritation and burning. Prolonged cooking and storage eliminates these crystals, but the roots should never be eaten raw." (44-72)

SYMPLOCARPUS FOETIDUS:

- 1966 Euell Gibbons, Stalking the Healtful Herbs, 258. "...overdoses are likely to cause nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and dimness of sight." (4-258)
- 1977 Lee Peterson, A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants, 156. "Contains calcium oxalate crystals; eating the raw plant causes an intense burning sensation in the mouth. Boiling does not remove this property - only thorough drying." (269-156)
- 1979 Malcolm Stuart, The Encyclopedia of Herbs and Herbalism, 269. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Slightly narcotic; medical use only. The fresh plant may cause blistering." (272-269)

CONSTITUENTS:

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- 1918 Joseph E. Meyer, The Herbalist, 116. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Chemically it contains a fixed oil, wax, starch, volatile oil and fat, salts of lime, silica, iron and manganese." (124-116)
- 1969 Alma R. Hutchens, Indian Herbalogy of North America, 251. "S. foetidus: Chemically it is known to contain fixed oil, starch, volatile oil and fat, salts of lime, silica, iron and manganese." (215-251)
- 1979 Malcolm Stuart, The Encyclopedia of Herbs and Herbalism, 269. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Resin; fixed oil; volatile oil; sugars; gums; unknown acrid substances." (272-269)
- 1980 Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal: The Guide to Herb Medicine, 176. "Symplocarpus foetidus: All parts of it have a disagreeable fetid odor, thought to resemble that of the offensive animal after which it is named. This odor resides in an extremely volatile principle, which is rapidly dissipated by heat, and diminished by desiccation." (139-176)

FOOD USES:

NATIVE FOOD USES: *Lysichitum americanum*

- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "Lysichitum americanum: Reagan has the following information for the Quileute: when roasting camas, wild onion, and garlic, the Indians cover them with layers of skunk cabbage leaves, saying that they give the food a fine flavor. They wrap elderberries ready to be stored in these leaves. He also mentions the eating of roots by bears. Haskins states that the use of skunk cabbage roots often saved coast Indian populations from starvation. The roots were supposedly cooked in pits, together with scrapings of the tender inner bark of hemlock, a method not described by any Indians of western Washington. But since Haskins does not give tribal names, it is impossible to check any of the information. The fondness of bears, and elk as well, for the roots is also mentioned by Haskins, who states that these animals often plowed up whole swamps to get them." (46-23)
- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "Lysichitum americanum: The Quileute cook and eat the root as do the Lower Chinook, who boil it for eating, but they do not prize it highly. The white part of the stalk below the ground is roasted on hot rocks by the Quinault for eating. The Cowlite stack the blossoms alternately along the sides of a stick, bury it and build a fire on top overnight. Then two or three are eaten; they are so strong that more would make one sick. The Quileute say that bears enjoy skunk

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cabbage roots. The Skokomish steam the young leaves." (46-22)

- 1963 Graighead & Davis, A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers, 12. "Lysichitum americanum: Crystals of calcium oxalate, in all parts of this plant, produce a stinging, burning sensation in the mouth when chewed raw. Heat breaks or rearranges the crystals in the starch so that the plant can be eaten with no unpleasant effects. By roasting and drying the root the Indians were able to use this plant. A flour was prepared from the starch. The young green leaves (cabbages) usually can be eaten after being boiled in several changes of water. At times even repeated boilings will not remove the stinging property." (6-12)

- 1963 Graighead & Davis, A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers, 12. "This plant is related to taro, the staple food of the Polynesians. Native peoples throughout the world use members of the Arum family for food, and quite independently they have discovered that drying or heating removes the stinging properties." (6-12)

- 1971 Medical Services, Indian Food: A Cookbook of Native Foods From British Columbia, 53. "PIT COOKING WITH SKUNK CABBAGE LEAVES (Emma Nelson - Kincolith): In the coastal or swampy areas of British Columbia the large green leaves of the skunk cabbage were often used to line steaming pits. So that they would not tear during the cooking process, the leaves were toasted. This is done by cutting the large middle veins of the leaf flush or even with the rest of the leaf. This helped to keep the leaf from rotting. The leaves were then passed two or three feet above an open flame to toast or dry. The toasted skunk cabbage leaves replaced both the timber grass and mats used in the pits of the Interior Indians. Four overlapping layers of leaves were placed around the sides of the pits and over the layer of earth which covered the hot rocks. The leaves were also used to cover the food before the final layer of earth was added. Toasted skunk cabbage leaves were also used to store dried berries, roots, salmon and other dried foods. Four layers of leaves were used to line the inside and top of a cedar box, then the food was wrapped in four layers of skunk cabbage leaves before it was placed in the box. The box was closed and stored in a cool place." (160-54)

- 1973 Turner & Bell, The Ethnobotany of the Southern Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, 271. "The large leaves are referred to as "Indian wax paper." They were used for a multitude of household tasks (Cranmer, 1969). Salmon to be steam-cooked were rolled in them. They were used to cover baskets of freshly picked berries. When berries were dried in cakes, skunk cabbage leaves with their midribs trimmed to make them flat were placed under the cedar frames before the berries were poured in. When the berries were dry, the leaves were simply peeled off. They were also used to hold berries in steaming pits (Boas, 1921, 1935; Cranmer, 1969; Johnson, 1969). The leaves were dried, ground to a powder, and mixed with boiling currants

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to thicken them before they were dried (Boas, 1921)." (150-271)

- 1975 Nancy J. Turner, Food Plants of British Columbia Indians, Part 1/Coastal Peoples, 72. "Skunk cabbage (*Lysichitum americanum*) was rarely used as food by British Columbia Indians, although in western Washington the leaf-stalks were roasted and eaten by the Quinault, the flower-stalks were steamed and eaten sparingly by the Cowlitz, the young leaves by the Skokomish, and the roots by the Quileute and lower Chinook. In no case were they highly prized. In British Columbia, the Pemberton Lillooet, and Interior group, ate them and the Central and Northern Nootka dug the roots in late fall, along with bracken rhizomes (*Pteridium aquilinum*), and ate them after steaming them as a thickening agent for boiled currants (*Ribes bracteosum*) before they were formed into berry cakes. The Haida considered the plants to be poisonous, and recalled instances of children being killed by eating the leaves. However, they mixed the leaves with salmon eggs as a preservative. The Lillooet people at Douglas Portage formerly ate the roots in small quantities, according to the notes of Dr. C.F. Newcombe at the turn of the century. The roots were "hot, like ginger." (44-72)

- 1976 Ferguson & Saunders, Canadian Wildflowers, 17. "This is regarded as an edible plant in spite of its odour. The young leaves can be used as a vegetable, if the water in which they are cooked is changed several times. The root was roasted in pits by the Indians who are said to have found it very good. When roasted it could be dried and ground into a flour. Its slightly bitter acrid taste disappeared if the flour was kept for several weeks before being used. Bears may eat the whole plant, and deer nibble the leaves." (140-17)

- 1976 Lewis J. Clark, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest, 3. "Lysichitum americanum: This huge plant is related to the 'taro', staple food of the Polynesians. Both plants produce a stinging sensation in the mouth due to calcium oxalate. Ages ago, however, the natives of our area discovered, as did those of the South Seas, that roasting and drying the root drove off the substance responsible for the stinging, burning taste, after which it could be ground to an edible flour." (1-3)

- 1977 Sound Heritage, Lillooet Stories, 71. "In the spring, when the ground thawed, the Mount Currie people would leave their underground houses and go out to dig roots. First, they dug the root of the skunk cabbage, 'HU-tl', and prepared it to eat." (232-71)

- 1978 Nancy J. Turner, Food Plants of British Columbia Indians, Part 2/Interior Peoples, 65. "The

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lower Lillooet of the Pemberton area, actually culturally and geographically transitional between the Coast and Interior, formerly ate the long, white roots. They were the first vegetable food to be gathered in the early spring in this locality. The roots, up to 25 cm (10 in.) long and 2.5 cm (1 in.) thick, were dug with sharp-pointed sticks, washed, and boiled or steamed in underground pits. They were named after their taste "hot, like pepper." None of the other Interior peoples ate skunk cabbage roots, although some used the leaves, as the Coastal peoples did, for lining steaming pits and for laying food on. The Pemberton Lillooet have not eaten the roots for several generations." (103-66)

- 1982 Lee Oates (Field Observations). "Lysichitum americanum: At Kincolth, a Nisgha village on the coast, it was common practice when canning first came to the people, to cut strips of Skunk Cabbage leaves to fit inside the jars, and then put the food to be preserved, inside the ring of Skunk Cabbage leaf. (Dorthy Robinson) Another custom was to wrap fresh salmon in the Skunk Cabbage Leaf and place it on a fire burned down to hot coals." (Lee)
- 1985 The Audubon Society Nature Guides, Wetlands, 433. "The short, fleshy underground stem is eaten by animals. Baked, it supplemented the winter diets of Indians." (330-433)

NATIVE FOOD USES: *Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Nutt.:

- 1916 F. W. Waugh, Iroquois Food and Food Preparation, 118. "Young leaves and shoots cooked like spinach and eaten...119. The roots...are referred to as having been used in the Iroquois area for food, but have been practically forgotten by present-day Iroquois." (369-239)
- 1936 O.P. Medsger, Edible Wild Plants, 137. "My friend carefully collected the young leaves with their thick, almost white leafstalks and prepared them for cooking. In the boiling process, he changed the water two or three times. I pronounced them good. All the offensiveness had disappeared and the taste was pleasing." (369-239)
- 1977 Lee Peterson, A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants, 156. "Cooked green, flour. The thoroughly dried young leaves are quite good reconstituted in soups or stews. The thoroughly dried rootstocks can be made into a pleasant cocoalike flour." (269-156)
- 1980 Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal: The Guide to Herb Medicine, 176. "Symplocarpus foetidus: The roots are an excellent emergency food, especially good baked or fried." (139-176)

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- 1981 Arnason, Hebda & Johns, Canadian Journal of Botany, Volume 59, Number 11, 2205.
"Iroquois: Young leaves and shoots cooked as greens (Waugh 1916), Dried root powder used in soups, stews (Parker, 1910)."

MEDICINAL USES:

NATIVE MEDICINAL USES: *Lysichitum americanum*

- 1934 Leslie L. Haskin, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Coast, 5. "Lysichitum americanum: Among the North Coast Indians, also, the roots were an important article of diet, particularly in early spring when famine was threatening, and this poor, despised plant has saved thousands from starvation. They cooked them in pits together with scrapings of the tender inner bark of hemlock, and when the pits were opened it was said: "It was so savory that the whole village was scented with it!" Cooking destroys much of the acrid, peppery flavor." (335-7)
- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "Lysichitum americanum: The root is used in many ways, from infusions in which invalids are bathed by the Samish and Swinomish, to the chewing of the raw root by Makah women to effect an abortion. The Quinault boil the root and drink the liquid to clean out the bladder, while the Makah use the same concoction as a blood purifier. Densmore furthermore states that the Makah chew a little of the root to soothe the stomach after an emetic of red elderberry. It is hot like pepper. Because of its supposed uterine action, the Quileute pound the root, boil it, and drink the juice to bring about easy delivery. The Kallam bake the root like bread and lay it on a carbuncle. The informant successfully used this on a carbuncle on his ankle." (46-22)
- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "Lysichitum americanum: The properties of the leaves, especially as a poultice, are known to many groups. The Quileute and Skokomish apply them to cuts and swellings, because they have a soothing effect; for the same reason they are used for headaches and fevers. The Makah warm the leaves and apply them to the chest for pain. The Quinault use the leaves as a general poultice. The Klallam hold the softest part of the leaf close to the fire and work it soft in the hands and put it on parts of the body sore with scrofula. The Cowlitz heat the blossom and apply it to the body for rheumatism. The Skokomish soak the roots in water and use it as a physic." (46-22)
- 1966 Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, 382. "Lysichitum americanum: The leaves of the skunk

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cabbage (k'!ik'!ao'k) are placed on sores to make them heal. The root is cut into pieces and steamed in a pit, in which it is kept a whole day. Then it is mashed, rubbed on sandstone, and applied as a poultice to swellings. This is covered with skunk cabbage leaves, and gum is smeared over it. Two strips of the bark of *Prunus emarginata*, v. *villosa* Sudw. (te'n'wum) are placed crosswise over this poultice and are held down with gum. The whole is left on until the swelling breaks (382)....Leaves of skunk cabbage are...boiled and applied as a poultice to draw out splinters and thorns (383)." (112-383)

- 1973 Turner & Bell, The Ethnobotany of the Southern Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, 270. "Lysichitum americanum: When a man had a carbuncle, his younger brother mixed Douglas Fir bark with perch oil and eagle down on a skunk cabbage leaf (Lysichitum americanum) and applied it to the sore. It was held on with a cedar bark pad for three days, and then the carbuncle was cut open (Boas, 1930)." (150-270)

- 1973 Turner & Bell, The Ethnobotany of the Southern Kwakiutl Indians of British Columbia, 271. "Lysichitum americanum: The leaves were washed, heated, and applied as a poultice to boils, carbuncles, and other sores (Boas, 1930; Willey, 1969). The roots were also used in this way (Johnson 1969). The leaves were mixed with *Fucus*, yellow cedar tips (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*), and hellebore (*Veratrum viride*) to make a sweat bath for a person with a general weakness or undefined sickness (Boas, 1930). The heated leaves were also used to draw out thorns and splinters (Boas, 1966). For swellings, the root was cut into pieces, steamed for a day, then mashed and applied as a poultice. It was covered with skunk cabbage leaves and wild cherry bark (*Prunus emarginata*) held down with pitch. This compress was left until the swelling broke (op.cit.). The root was pulverized with sandstone and rubbed into a child's head to make his hair grow (op.cit.). The Kwakiutl made balls by rolling up skunk cabbage leaves and tying them with cedar bark twine (op. cit.). (150-272)

NATIVE MEDICINAL USES: *Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Nutt.:

- 1708 Michel Sarrazin, *La flore du Canada*, Quebec-Paris, Boivin 1978 transl. 24. "It smells like garlic, but more foetid. I believe it is suppurative...Its root is useful for the suppuration of tumors." A note in the hand of J.F. Gaultier in the margin reads: "The inhabitants of Canada use the root of this arum for the flux in cows and all livestock. It is also used for the flux in children. It is put in their 'bouillies'. The cooked root is good to eat." (369-238)

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- 1785 Rev. Manasseh Cutler, An account of some of the vegetable productions, naturally growing in this part of America. Indians taught white man the uses of this plant. (369-238)
- 1830 C. S. Rafinesque, Medical Flora or Manual of Medical Botany of the United States Volume 2, 231-2. "The syrup is a mild one, used in senile catarrh...The leaves are less powerful, but the seeds most active, requiring smaller doses...Leaves externally used for wounds and ulcers, herpes and cutaneous affections, bruised and applied; also used to dress blisters, promoting the discharge. It is said that bears are fond of this plant and feed on it. The lotion of the root cures the itch." (369-238)
- 1851 Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, History of the Indian Tribes in the United States, Volume 4, 502. Skunk cabbage used as a palliative by Indians for asthma. (369-238)
- 1915 Frank G. Speck, Medicine Practices of the Northeastern Algonquians, Delaware, 320. "Skunk cabbage for colds." (369-239)
- 1922 W.D. Wallis, Medicines used by the Micmac Indians. "Used the plant for headache." (369-239)
- 1923 Huron H. Smith, Ethnobotany of the Menomini, 23. "This is the root that the bear likes to dig and eat. It is employed as a poultice. The root is first dried, then powdered and then sprayed over the surface of the wound. It is also used as a seasoner with other medicines...They give the use as a remedy for cramps. The root hairs alone are used for stopping hemorrhages. Skunk root is one of the ingredients of the tattooing set. Tattooing was not employed by the Menomini so much for the design as for the treatment of diseases, being a talisman against their return. The medicines were tattooed in over the seat of the pain. Not all the herbs used were identified for the writer did not see them growing. Among them were powdered birchbark, charcoal pigment, skunk root, deer's ear root (*Menyanthes trifoliata*), red top root (*Lobelia cardinalis*) black root (unknown), and yellow root, probably '*Oxalis acetosella*'. The medicines were moistened and tattooed into the flesh with the teeth of the gar pike, dipped in the medicines. The various colors stay and form a guard against the disease. After the tattooing is done, the surface is poulticed and painted with medicine. Under the drug name of 'Dracontium', the white man has employed skunk root as a medicine...narcotic..It is probably of little value and rarely employed." (369-239)
- 1928 Huron H. Smith, Ethnobotany of the Meskwaki, 203. "Charles Keosatok accompanied the writer on a long auto trip to a springy place along the Iowa river to get this important remedy. He dug one for us and one for himself to send to his relatives in Oklahoma. The older roots, where the ends had exfoliated or

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perhaps been eaten off by crayfish, he explained had been eaten by the snake spirit "monito". If one were to have more than four roots of this in his possession at any one time, the snake spirit would cause the rattlesnakes to come into his house and bite the inhabitants. For this reason, he would not take more than one root, because he had three at home. The fine rootlets or root hairs were to be used in curing toothache. The leaf bases furnished a poultice to reduce swellings. The seeds themselves were medicine, but he did not know their use." (369-239)

- 1955 J. Auguste Mockle, Contributions a l'etude des plantes medicinales du Canada, Quebec transl. 26. "A powerful antispasmodic. The leaves are used externally in skin diseases." (369-239)
- 1972 Michael A. Weiner, Earth Medicine, Earth Food, 20. "Spathyema foetida: The foul-smelling swamp dweller skunk cabbage was utilized by the Winnebago and Dakota tribes to stimulate the removal of phlegm in asthma. The rootstock was official in the U.S. Pharmacopoeia from 1820 to 1882 when it was employed in respiratory and nervous disorder and in rheumatism and dropsy." (147-20)
- 1972 Michael A. Weiner, Earth Medicine, Earth Food, 20. "Spathyema foetida: Indian usage of this species was quite limited. Of the six or so tribes that used the skunk cabbage, only the Micmacs specifically treated headache with it. They bound a bunch of the leaves together, crushed them, and inhaled the sharp odor." (147-65)
- 1972 Michael A. Weiner, Earth Medicine, Earth Food, 20. "Spathyema foetida: The Meskwakis applied root hairs or rootlets of skunk cabbage to affected teeth." (147-133)
- 1972 Michael A. Weiner, Earth Medicine, Earth Food, 20. "Spathyema foetida: The Menominee Indians prepared a tea by boiling skunk cabbage root hairs and applying it to stop external bleeding. The leaf bases were applied in a wet dressing for bruises by the Meskwakis." (147-145)
- 1981 Arnason, Hebda & Johns, Canadian Journal of Botany, Volume 59, Number 11, 2248. "Ojibwa: Cough: root steeped (Gilmore 1933); Algonquin: Medicine (Black 1980); Maritime: Headache: herb plant (Chandler et al. 1979)." (435-2248)
- 1981 Raymond Stark, Guide to Indian Herbs, 37. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Many Indian tribes made use of the Skunk Cabbage for its tendency to quiet muscle spasms. The Delawares steeped the leaves in whiskey to make a remedy for tuberculosis. The root of Skunk Cabbage has been used to treat bronchitis,

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mucous congestion, whooping cough, asthma, and hay fever. Some Indians boiled the root-hairs of Skunk Cabbage and used the liquid to curb external bleeding. Externally, the mashed root was used on boils, swellings, and blood poisoning." (158-37)

- 1983 Laura C. Martin, Wildflower Folklore, 76. "Symplocarpus foetidus: American Indians smelled the crushed leaves as a cure for a headache and made the raw root into a salve to relieve pain and swelling from rheumatism. A cough syrup was made from very sparse amounts of the boiled root. The root is very hot to the tongue and is somewhat narcotic." (399-78)

SWEATS:

- 1966 Franz Boas, Kwakiutl Ethnography, 376. "Lysichitum americanum..the sweat bath is made in the following manner: A long hole is made in the ground, and stones are thrown into it. Over these kelp and the leaves of Coelapleurum Gmelini D.C. Lebed. and the points of yellow cedar trees are spread. These in turn are covered with skunk cabbage leaves. Blue hellebore is dissolved in a bucket containing half fresh water, half salt water. This is thrown on the stones. The person lies down on the skunk cabbage leaves and is covered with a blanket. He remains there for a long time, until he sweats profusely. The skunk cabbage leaves, when cooked, are placed on the body hot." (112-376)

EUROPEAN MEDICINAL USES: *Lysichitum americanum*

- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "Lysichitum americanum: Stuhr states that the root forms the chief ingredient of the patent medicine "Skookum." It is reputed to act as a stimulant, antispasmodic, and emetic for bronchial and pulmonary affections. It is used in a salve for ringworm, swellings, and inflammatory rheumatism." (46-23)

- 1985 The Audubon Society Nature Guides, Wetlands, 433. "Long ago the peppery sap was used to treat ringworm." (330-433)

EUROPEAN MEDICINAL USES: *Symplocarpus foetidus* (L), Nutt.

- 1749 Peter Kalm, Travels in North America, 257. "Skunk cabbage...Dr. Colden told me that he had employed the root in all cases where the root of the arum is used, especially against scurvy etc." (369-238)

- 1778 J. Carver, Travels Through the Interior Part of North America in the Years 1766, 67 and 68.,

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518. "Skunk cabbage or Poke is an herb that grows in moist and swampy places. The leaves of it are about a foot long, and six inches broad, nearly oval, but rather pointed. The roots are composed of great numbers of fibers, a lotion of which is made use of by the people in the colonies for the cure of the itch. There issues a strong musky smell from this herb, something like the animal of the same name described, and on that account it is so termed." (369-238)

- 1817-20 Jacob Bigelow, American Medical Botany, Being A Collection of the Native Medicinal Plants of the United States, 47-8. "An acrid principle exists in the root even when perfectly dry, producing an effect like that of Arum and Ranunculi....The seeds when dry are reduced to half their former size, and in this state they have a tough waxy consistence and an animal odour. They contain fixed oil in abundance, which is easily forced out of them by expression....They burn with an oily smoke, leaving behind a large coal..Culter was the first who recommended its use in asthmatic cases...since the recommendation...many country physicians have employed the root in asthma, catarrh, and chronic coughs, with evident benefit...Some caution...is requisite in its management...not only vomiting but headache, vertigo, and temporary blindness [may result]." (369-238)

- 1859-61 John D. Gunn, New Domestic Physician or Home Book of Health. A Complete Guide For Families, Pointing Out in Familiar and Plain Terms the Causes, Symptoms, Treatment and Cure of the Diseases Incident to Man, Woman and Children with Directions for Using Medicinal Plants, 857. "The root is the part used, and is a valuable expectorant and antispasmodic." (369-238)

- 1892 Charles F. Millspaugh, American medicinal plants, an illustrated and descriptive guide to plants indigenous to and naturalized in the United States which are used in medicine, 169. "The skunk cabbage is not officinal in the U.S. Ph. having been dismissed. In the Eclectic Materia Medica the use of this drug, especially compounded with others is considerable. The fresh or dried fleshy fruits divested of the seeds, and mashed with an equal portion of Indian meal, have been used in this neighbourhood (Central New York) to a great extent, and with excellent success, as a poultice for caking mammae, promptly, in many instances coming under my notice, dissipating the hardness and restoring the glands to health." (369-239)

- 1918 Joseph E. Meyer, The Herbalist, 116. "Internally it is a stimulant, exerting expectorant antispasmodic, with slightly narcotic influences. It has been used in the spasms of asthma, whooping-cough, nasal catarrh, and bronchial irritation. Externally in the form of an ointment it has a soothing effect. Water or alcohol extracts their virtues." (124-116)

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- 1963 Nelson Coon, Using Plants For Healing, 193. "Symplocarpus foetidus: It found its way into our own pharmacopoeia under the name 'dracontium' and was listed as an emetic, narcotic, and antispasmodic." (134-193)
- 1969 Alma R. Hutchens, Indian Herbalogy of North America, 251. "Stimulant, Expectorant, Antispasmodic, Diuretic, slight Narcotic influence. USES: A well-known and often-used medicine from the earth, Skunk cabbage is much valued in spasms of asthma, tuberculosis, all bronchial and lung affections, including whooping cough, hay fever, pleurisy and pulmonary consumption. Used also to control the involuntary conditions of hysteria, fits, epilepsy and convulsions. EXTERNALLY: An ointment for external tumours which stimulates granulations and eases pain." (215-252)
- 1974 John Lust, The Herb Book, 347. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Skunk cabbage loses effectiveness with long storage. INFUSION: Steep 1 tsp. rootstock and roots in 1 cup water. Take 1 cup a day, a tablespoon at a time. TINCTURE: A dose is from 3 to 15 drops." (195-348)
- 1974 John Lust, The Herb Book, 347. "Symplocarpus Foetidus: Antispasmodic, diuretic, emetic, expectorant, slightly narcotic. The rootstock and roots of skunk cabbage have been used to treat respiratory ailments, including hay fever, asthma, whooping cough, bronchial problems and mucous congestion. It has also been helpful for nervous disorders, spasmodic problems, rheumatism and dropsy. Some American Indians boiled the root hairs to make a wash for stopping external bleeding. Those of one tribe inhaled the odor of the crushed leaves to cure headache - which may be a classic case of a cure worse than the disease." (195-347)
- 1979 Joseph E. Meyer, The Herbalist, 116. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Flowers in March and April. Fruit in August to September. Seeds and roots used medicinally. Water or alcohol extracts their virtue. Chemically it contains a fixed oil, wax, starch, volatile oil and fat, salts of lime, silica, iron and manganese. Properties and uses: Internally it is a stimulant, exerting expectorant antispasmodic, with slightly narcotic influences. It has been used in the spasms of asthma, whooping-cough, nasal catarrh, and bronchial irritation. Externally in the form of an ointment it has a soothing effect. Dose: A teaspoonful of the root, cut small or granulated, to a cup of boiling water. Drink cold one cupful during the day, a large mouthful at a time; of the tincture 5 to 20 drops." (124-116)
- 1979 Nelson Coon, Using Plants For Healing, 193. "Symplocarpus foetidus: In Eastern North America, Indians called it "Skota". In the pharmacopoeia it is listed under the name "dracontium" and was listed as an

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emetic, narcotic, and antispasmodic. An overdose is poisonous. Used in cases of asthma where the narcotic properties came into play. The ground, powdered roots of skunk cabbage were used by the Indians as a styptic. The root is usually used, and is cut, broken, and powdered just before being used. 1 teaspoon of root cut-up and simmered in boiling water. One mouthful a day, mixed with honey." (134-193)

- 1979 Malcolm Stuart, The Encyclopedia of Herbs and Herbalism, 269. "Symplocarpus foetidus: (Dried root and rhizome) Antispasmodic; expectorant; diuretic; emetic; mild sedative. Of use in the treatment of various respiratory complaints, including asthma, bronchitis, whooping cough, hay fever, respiratory catarrh. The leaves can be used fresh as a vulnerary. Root-stock formerly employed in the treatment of certain nervous disorders; also used to treat snake bites." (272-269)

- 1980 Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal: The Guide to Herb Medicine, 176. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Credited with antispasmodic, emetic, diuretic, and narcotic properties, has been used to treat asthma, chronic dry coughing spells, and other upper respiratory problems, chronic rheumatism, nervous affections, muscular spasms and twitchings, hysteria, and dropsy (water retention). Externally utilized as an ointment or salve for skin irritations." (139-176)

- 1981 Raymond Stark, Guide to Indian Herbs, 37. "Symplocarpus foetidus: The plant is mildly narcotic, antispasmodic, diuretic, emetic, and expectorant. However, an overdose of the root of Skunk Cabbage can be poisonous." (158-37)

- 1983 Laura C. Martin, Wildflower Folklore, 76. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Skunk cabbage was at one time much sought after as a contraceptive. It was thought that one tablespoon three times a day for three weeks would cause permanent sterility in men or women. A solution made from the roots was thought to cure venereal diseases." (399-78)

- 1983 Laura C. Martin, Wildflower Folklore, 78. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Skunk cabbage was listed in the United States Pharmacopeia from 1820 to 1882 and was used most often as relief from spasms or cramps or constrictions of any kind. It was used to treat bad coughs, asthma, lockjaw, epilepsy, and rheumatism." (399-78)

PREPARATION & DOSAGES:

SYMPLOCARPUS FOETIDUS (L.) Nutt.:

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- 1918 Joseph E. Meyer, The Herbalist, 116. "A teaspoonful of the root, cut small or granulated, to a cup of boiling water. Drink cold one cupful during the day, a large mouthful at a time; of the tincture 5 to 20 min." (124-116)
- 1963 Nelson Coon, Using Plants for Healing, 193. "Symplocarpus foetidus: The part of the plant usually used is the root, although there is record of the seeds being medicinally potent. The dried root is cut, broken, and powdered just before use. Meyer suggests a dose of 1 teaspoon of root cut up and simmered in boiling water, "a mouthful of this being taken regularly during the day." It is suggested that mixing it with honey makes it more palatable and more useful." (134-193)
- 1966 Euell Gibbons, Stalking the Healtful Herbs, 258. "Symplocarpus foetidus: The part used in herbal medicine is the freshly dried root, 1 ounce of the root being covered with boiling water, steeped for 1/2 hour, then strained, and sweetened with 2 tablespoons honey. This tea is given cold, 1 ounce at a time, three times a day for cough, catarrh, asthma, or bronchitis." (4-258)
- 1969 Alma R. Hutchens, Indian Herbalogy of North America, 252. "In small doses the powder may be mixed with honey: 1/2-4 oz. of honey, in 1/2-1 teaspoonful amounts. For infusions, the root, cut in small pieces, 1 teaspoonful steeped in 1 cupful of boiling water for 1/2 hr. When cold, 1 tablespoonful at a time throughout the day as required. Dose of the tincture, 3-15 drops." (215-252)
- 1980 Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal: The Guide to Herb Medicine, 176. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Dose: For medicinal use 1 Teaspoon of granulated root is slowly boiled with 1 pint of water, for approximately 1/2 hour in a covered container. Take 1 tablespoon at a time, 1 cup per day." (139-176)

COLLECTING & DRYING:

SYMPLOCARPUS FOETIDUS (L.) Nutt.:

- 1980 Michael Weiner, Weiner's Herbal: The Guide to Herb Medicine, 176. "Symplocarpus foetidus: The root is the part usually employed in medicine. It should be collected in autumn, or early in spring, and dried with care. The acrimony, however, is dissipated by heat, and is entirely lost in decoction. It is also diminished by time and exposure; and the root should not be kept for use longer than a single season. (U.S.D.)" (139-176)

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MATERIAL USES:

- 1975 Nancy J. Turner, Food Plants of British Columbia Indians, Part 1/Coastal Peoples, 72. "Lysichitum americanum: Wherever Skunk Cabbage leaves were available, they were used as 'Indian Wax Paper', for lining berry baskets, berry-drying racks, and steaming pits. They apparently did not impart any unpleasant flavor to the food." (44-72)
- 1973 Hitchcock & Arthur, Flora of the Pacific Northwest, 676. "Lysichitum americanum: On the whole a choice garden plant for the boggy area or water's edge, easily transplanted or propagated by divisions of the underground stem." (287-676)
- 1979 Nancy J. Turner, Plants In British Columbia Indian Technology, 121. "The large, flat, water-repellent leaves are aptly referred to by some native people as "Indian waxed paper." They filled the role of waxed paper in virtually all Coastal Indian Cultures and even in some areas of the Interior. They were widely employed for such tasks as lining steam-cooking pits and covering food being cooked in them, lining and covering berry baskets, lining storage pits, such as for "stink salmon eggs," laying under food, wrapping salmon for cooking, lining oil boxes to prevent leakage, and drying berries and other food on. For this last, the fleshy mid-ribs were removed and the leaves were laid overlapping on the ground or on a wooden rack. Then rectangular wooden frames were set over them and the berries, which were usually cooked to a jam-like consistency, were poured into the frames and allowed to dry. Later the leaves were simply peeled off the bottom of the berry cake and it was stored. Although they have a decidedly acrid odour, the leaves did not seem to impart any unpleasant taste to the foods they came in contact with. The Bella Coola and other Coast Salish peoples made an ingenious temporary drinking cup and water dipper by folding a large skunk cabbage leaf in half from top to bottom and pulling the edges back to the lower end, holding them together with the stem as a handle. They also constructed makeshift berry containers by pinning the leaf edges together with sticks. The Squamish used the larger leaves for sun shades on hot summer days." (137-122)

CULTIVATION:

- 1982 Arthur R. Kruckeberg, Gardening With Native Plants of the Pacific Northwest, 149. "Lysichitum americanum: The large underground stem can be divided to make transplants; seeds should be tried as well, as they are reputed to germinate easily." (271-150)
- 1985 Harry R. Phillips, Growing & Propagating Wild Flowers, 58. "Symplocarpus foetidus: SEED: Sow

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freshly collected seeds in a shaded outdoor bed in early fall and expect germination the following spring. Allow the seedlings to remain in the bed until they go dormant in the fall and then transplant them into the garden. Make sure the seedlings are watered regularly during the growing season. Alternatively, seeds may be sown outdoors in flats or deep pots in the fall and then placed in trays in the spring and subirrigated through the season. DIVISION: Skunk Cabbage grows from a thick offensive-smelling rhizome that penetrates 2 feet or more into the ground. The plant can be taken up in the fall or when the plant goes dormant; just dig down around the plant and remove as much of the rhizome as possible. Cut the rhizome into pieces that include one or two nodes. Plant each piece horizontally several inches below soil level and look for new shoots the next spring." (340-58)

HISTORY/BELIEFS

HISTORICAL RECORDS:

- 1979 Malcolm Stuart, *The Encyclopedia of Herbs and Herbalism*, 269. "Symplocarpus foetidus: Skunk Cabbage root and seed were introduced to Europe in the early nineteenth century from American folk use, and although included in the United States Pharmacopoeia for a short time they did not attract much attention since superior antispasmodics were available. It is, however, retained in folk medicine." (272-269)

SPIRITUAL BELIEFS:

- 1945 Erna Gunther, *Ethnobotany of Western Washington*, 22. "A Quileute sealer puts some leaves under the bow piece of his canoe because the leaves are dead and flat and will lie still, therefore the seal will lie still too and be caught easily. If a sealer took elk meat in his lunch, the seal would jump around because the elk is a "jumping" animal. Eggs in a lunch cause the seal to roll around in the water." (46-22)

NOMENCLATURE:

- 1976 Lewis J. Clark, *Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest*, 3. "Lysichitum americanum: The generic name is from the Greek words for 'loose', and for the classical 'tunic', probably with reference to the spathe in which the developing flower-stem is wrapped." (1-3)

- 1983 Laura C. Martin, *Wildflower Folklore*, 76. "Symplocarpus foetidus: This "hermit of the bog" is unfortunately best known for its particularly offensive smell. This smell accounts for its common name and

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also for the species name, 'foetidus', which means "evil smelling." The genus name is from two Greek words, 'symploke' and 'karpos,' which mean "connected fruit." This refers to the fruiting stalk, which is the result of the ovaries growing together. Other common names are clumpfoot cabbage and polecat weed." (399-76)

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LIFE-FORMS:

- 1934 Leslie L. Haskin, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Coast, 5. "The roots are very hot and peppery, but bears and elk are fond of them and plow up whole swamps in their search for this food." (335-5)
- 1939 W. L. McAtee, Wildfowl Food Plants, 45. "..the skunk cabbage (*Spathyema foetida*) produce numbers of large fleshy green fruits that are reported to be eaten frequently by wild ducks. So far in Biological Survey laboratory work they have been found in only a few stomachs, however, chiefly in those of wood ducks. One of these contained thirty-one fruits of skunk cabbage." (408-45)
- 1951 Martin, Zim & Nelson, American Wildlife & Plants, A Guide To Wildlife Food Habits, 384. "The large seeds of this ill-scented plant are eaten by several gamebirds including the ring-necked pheasant. Waterfowl (seeds): Wood Duck. Upland Gamebirds (seeds): Ruffed Grouse, Ring-necked Pheasant, Bobwhite Quail." (336-385)
- 1963 Graighead & Davis, A Field Guide to Rocky Mountain Wildflowers, 12. "Yellow Skunkcabbage is eaten by black bears throughout the warmer months." (6-12)
- 1976 Eugene N. Kozloff, Plants and Animals of the Pacific Northwest, 164. "The odor of the plant (*Lysichitum americanum*) does resemble that of a skunk, but it is not offensive. In the skunk-cabbage of eastern North America, *Symplocarpus foetidus*, the inflorescence produces a rather disagreeable stench; and in various Old World relatives, the inflorescences smell like dead animals, horse manure, dog dung, and stale urine. The odors attract carrion beetles, blowflies, or other insects that normally lay their eggs on smelly things that can be eaten by their larvae. While the insects are muddling around among the flowers, they pick up pollen that they carry to other flowers. The insects drawn by the inflorescences of our skunk-cabbage include such diverse types as honeybees and certain beetles." (80-164)
- 1976 Lewis J. Clark, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest, 3. "*Lysichitum americanum*: Bears consume the whole plant, including the short thick rootstock, while deer occasionally browse the leaves." (1-3)

STORIES:

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- 1976 Lewis J. Clark, Wild Flowers of the Pacific Northwest, 4. "At the end of winter there is a season in which we are daily expecting spring. . .Methinks the first obvious evidence of spring is the pushing out of the swamp willow catkins...then the pushing up of the skunk-cabbage spathes..." (Henry David Thoreau, Journal (March 10, 1853)

Note: He was referring to the greenish-brown skunk-cabbage of Massachusetts (*Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) Nutt.), a plant of similar habit." (1-4)

- 1945 Erna Gunther, Ethnobotany of Western Washington, 22. "The Kathlamet Indians have an interesting myth concerning the skunk cabbage. In the Ancient days they say, there were no salmon. The Indians had nothing to eat except roots and leaves. Principal among these was the skunk cabbage. Finally the spring salmon came for the first time. As they passed up the river a person stood upon the shore and shouted: "Here comes our relatives whose bodies are full of eggs. If it had not been for me all the people would have starved."

"Who speaks to us?" asked the salmon.

"Your uncle, Skunk Cabbage.", was the reply.

Then the salmon went ashore to see him, and as a reward for having fed the people he was given an elkskin blanket and a war club, and was set in the rich soft soil near the river. There he stands to this day wrapped in his elk skin blanket and holding aloft his war club." (46-23, 335-7))

ILLUSRATIONS:

- Good B/W picture + distribution map (342-281)
- Excellant B/W, shows flower as well (385-37)
- Excellant B/W of *S. foetidus* (269-157)
- Excellant B/W of *L. americanum* (6-12)
- Good Color Drawings of both (300-18)
- Best B/W of *L. american* (24-326)

The information in these articles is primarily for reference and

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education. They are not intended to be a substitute for the advice of a physician. The instructor does not advocate self-diagnosis or self-medication; He urges anyone with continuing symptoms, however minor, to seek medical advice. The reader should be aware that any plant substance, whether used as food or medicine, externally or internally, may cause an allergic reaction in some people.

Maurice L.B. Oates Jr., M.A.
(Ya'-ga-hlo'o)

BOOKS NOT CHECKED OFF:

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LATIN NAME: *Lysichitum americanum* Hulten & St. John (287-676)
Symplocarpus foetidus (L.) Nutt.

Note: Check out alternate names; *Dracontium foetidum* (Linn.), *Spathyema foetida*, *Ictodes foetidus* (141-742) *Symplocarpus foetidus* (124-116)