**Common Names:** Greater, water, white, or winged yam  
**Synonymy:** D. atropurpurea Roxb., D. purpurea Roxb., D. sativa Del.  
**Origin:** Southeast Asia  

**Botanical Description:** Vigorously twining herbaceous vine, from massive underground tuber. Stems to 10 m (30 ft) or more in length, freely branching above; internodes square in cross section, with corners compressed into "wings," these often red-purple tinged. Aerial tubers (bulbils) formed in leaf axils (not as freely as in D. bulbifera), elongate, to 10 cm (4 in) x 3 cm (1.2 in), with rough, bumpy surfaces. Leaves long petioled, opposite (often with only 1 leaf persistent); blades to 20 cm (8 in) or more long, narrowly heart shaped, with basal lobes often angular. Flowers small, occasional, male and female arising from leaf axils on separate plants (i.e., a dioecious species), male flowers in panicles to 30 cm (1 ft) long, female flowers in smaller spikes. Fruit a 3-parted capsule; seeds winged.

**NOTE:** May be confused with D. bulbifera L., which has small or absent underground tubers, more numerous aerial tubers, and alternate leaves (see next pages). Native wild yams, D. floridana Bartl. and D. quarternata (Walt.) Gmel., infrequent in hammocks and floodplains of north and west Florida, never forming aerial tubers, leaf blades rarely to 15 cm (6 in) long.


**Distribution:** Cultivated throughout the tropics for its edible underground tuber, and

**Life History:** Normally grows for 8-10 months, then goes dormant for 3-4 months, with aerial stems dying back during dormancy (Martin and Rhodes 1977). Grown commercially as far north as southern Japan, a latitude similar to south Georgia’s (Okagami 1986). Said to survive winters in France if planted deep enough (Coursey 1967). Fertile seeds rarely produced; spread by aerial tubers and fragments of underground tuber (Coursey 1967).