**Calathea lutea ‘Cuban Cigar’**

**Description**
Not your normal Calathea! Calatheas are generally smallish plants to around 50cm high, grown for their attractively patterned leaves. This Calathea is a giant, growing 6 to 10 feet tall (1.8m to 3m).

*Calathea lutea* is an extremely beautiful and unusual plant. The oval shaped leaves are broad and attractive, being gracefully held on long stems which gives this plant a very tropical looking appearance. The leaves are heavily pleated with a beautiful waxy backing, which makes the undersides of the leaves look silver. Leaves are around 1 metre long and about 40-50cm wide.

The flowers are stunning, although not beautiful in the traditional sense. They appear to be made of thick, reddish/brown coloured wax. The small round bracts nest in and overlap with each other, resulting in a long, cigar shaped arrangement. The flowers grow to around 1 foot in length and are fantastic cut flowers – not to mention a conversation piece! This flower will add subtle beauty to any display.

**Cultivation**
Calatheas love heat and humidity. This particular species will grow in full sun to half shade. The large leaves are fairly tolerant of the wind and do no shred easily, although a slightly sheltered area is always best.

They may be grown outdoors in the garden or as a large container specimen. Soil should contain a high level of organic matter, and be well drained. Keep them on the moist side (with perfect soil drainage) and fertilize regularly.

You should have your first flowers within about 12 months of planting your rhizome. Rhizomes can be lifted in cold winter climates and stored. An easily grown tropical!

**At a glance:**
Suitable for Zones: 9-12 (see my Zone Hardiness map page in my eBay store)
Sun requirements: Full sun to half shade
Flowering times: Spring/Summer, almost year round in warmer areas
Moisture requirements: Moderate
Size when fully grown: 1.8 -3metres
Not frost tolerant
Suitable as an indoor and container plant (for large areas)

**Planting instructions**
*Please plant as soon as possible after you receive the rhizome.*

**We recommend establishing your plant in a pot, before planting in the garden.**

Your rhizome may have leaves, or the leaves may have been partially or completely removed to aid the plant’s health during travel. If the leaves have been completely removed, the rhizome should still have growing ‘buds’ or new shoots as well as the leaf stem.

The rhizome should be planted with the top (leaf stem/new shoots/buds pointing upwards) no more than 3-4 cm under the soil. New shoots or larger buds should be above the soil. You can often look at the rhizome and see where the soil line had been while it was growing.

**It is very important not to plant the rhizome too deep**, as this will invite fungi and cause root rot. Freshly planted rhizomes need oxygen to grow new roots and will die if the planting medium is too dense or too wet.

After planting, water thoroughly, then do not water again until soil is getting dry. Keep evenly moist, but not wet, when shoots to grow and leaves start to unfold.

If planted in pots, these should be of sufficient size - at least 10 to 15 cm wider than rhizome size. Keep the pots in a warm, sunny place. When leaves start to unfold the plants can be planted out - again in well drained soil.

A slow release fertilizer is ideal in the beginning. Larger and already established plants require more fertilizing and more water.