

# LOOK AGAIN !

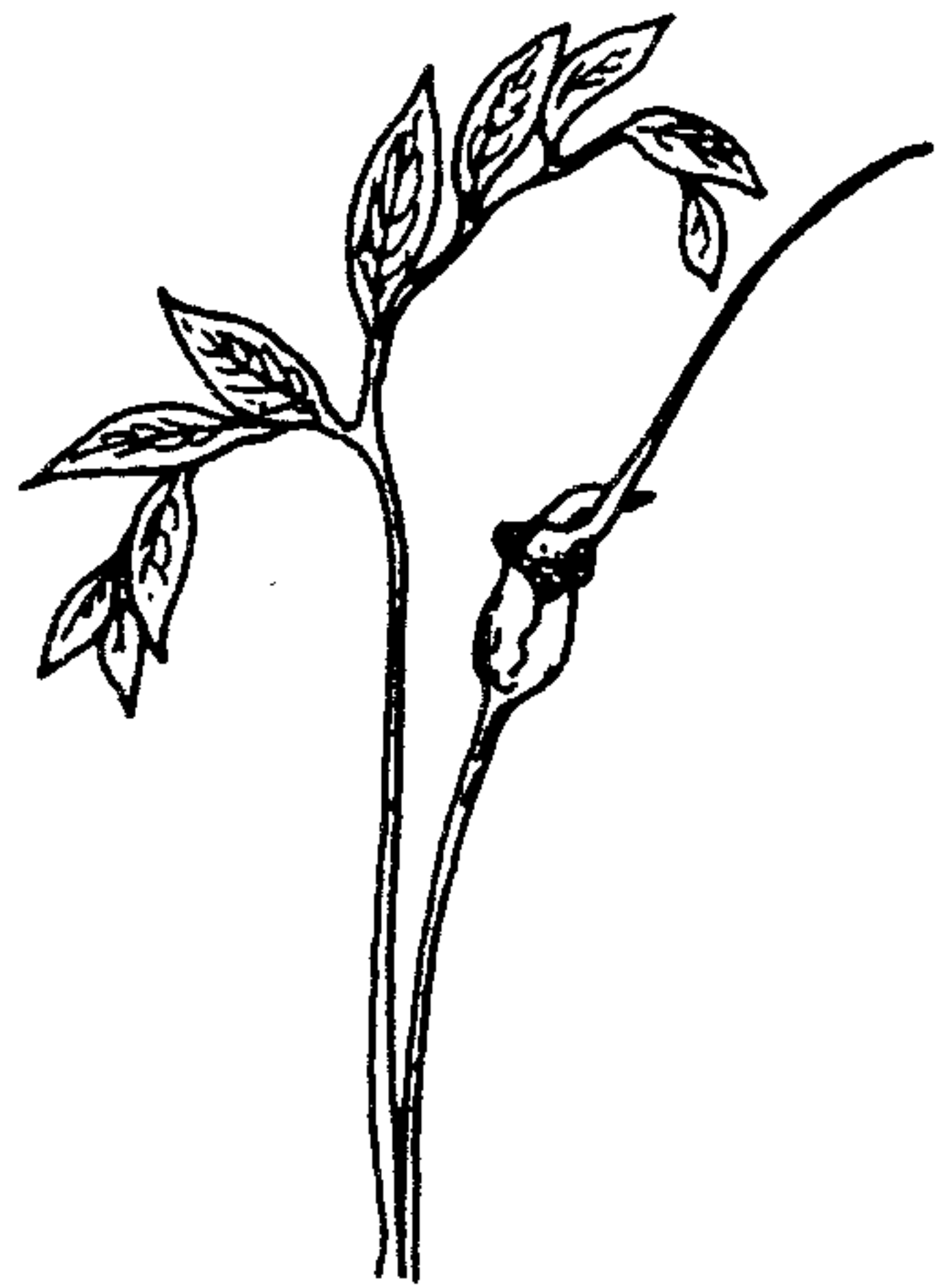
Jack-in-the-pulpit (Arisaema triphyllum) gets a lot of attention not only because of its unusual flowers but because of the many variations that occur between individual plants.

These differences can be perplexing. There may be either a single leaf or a pair, each with three leaflets, but the lateral ones might be lobed so as to make it appear that there are five. The spathe may be pale green or striped with green or purplish brown, its tube smooth or fluted, and its hood horizontal or drooping. As might be expected, there is disagreement among taxonomists, some of whom consider the aberrants to be varieties (e.g., atrorubens, pusillum and stewardsonii) of A. triphyllum, while others insist that they should be accorded specific rank.



ARISAEMA  
TRIPHYLLUM

A question that frequently arises is how to distinguish a male plant from a female--in other words, a Jill from a Jack. (In England the related Cuckoo-pint, Arum maculatum, is also called Lords-and-Ladies; the first part of that name denotes plants with purple stripes, the second the plain green ones.) The only sure way to determine the sex of a Jack-in-the-pulpit is to look at the base of the spadix to see whether it has staminate or pistillate flowers, or both. It is interesting to note that this is one of a very few species in which individuals are capable of changing their sex in response to growing conditions.



A. DRACONTIUM

Occasionally someone who has heard the name Green Dragon will mistakenly assume that it refers to a green-flowered Jack-in-the-pulpit. It really belongs to Arisaema dracontium, a rarer and even more bizarre plant with more numerous leaflets and an extremely long spadix that extends far beyond the spathe.

*Dick Smith*