A decorative background featuring a light green geometric pattern of triangles. Several houseplants are shown in triangular cutouts: a purple and silver peperomia in the top left, a monstera leaf in the top right, a pothos in the middle right, a snake plant in the bottom right, and a rubber plant with a succulent in the bottom center.

# A ROOKIE'S GUIDE: CARING FOR 8 POPULAR HOUSEPLANTS

BY BRITTANY GOLDWYN

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Everything you need to  
help these plants thrive!

[bybrittanygoldwyn.com](http://bybrittanygoldwyn.com)



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# INTRODUCTION

## HI THERE, PLANT LOVER!

# INTRODUCTION

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## Hi there, fellow plant lover!

I'm Brittany, owner of by Brittany Goldwyn, a modern DIY, crafting, plant-loving blog where I inspire others to infuse creativity into daily life. And my house is full of plants.

Many people think they can't take care of houseplants. I used to say the same. But the truth is, with a little research about houseplant care, you can find the perfect plants for you.

This guide outlines 8 easy-to-care-for houseplants that you can master today with just a few tips. I promise—you can do it! Enjoy.

✉ [bybrittanygoldwyn@gmail.com](mailto:bybrittanygoldwyn@gmail.com)

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# CHAPTER 1

# POTHOS

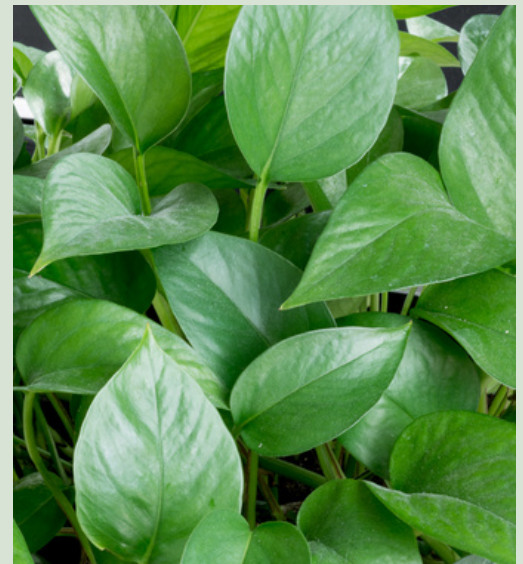
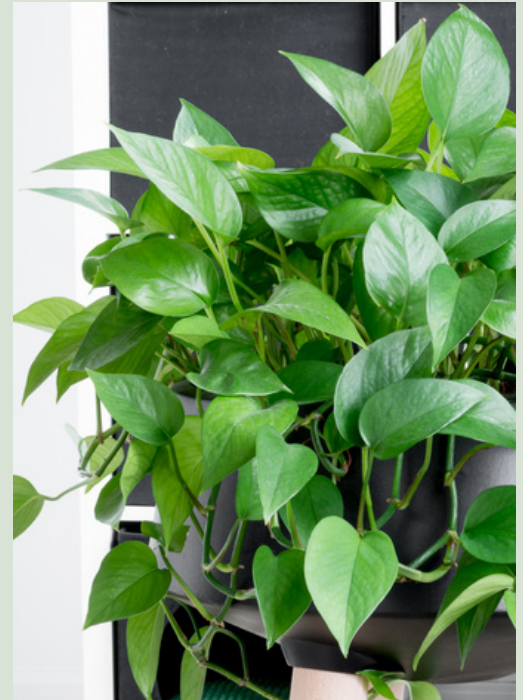
# 1 | POTHOS

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## HOW TO CARE FOR POTHOS

One of my first plant posts ever was about how to propagate pothos plants from cuttings, so it's only fitting that I kick off my houseplant care guide with the pothos plant, one of the most popular and easiest to care for houseplants.

You might hear it called golden pothos, silver vine, taro vine, devil's vine, devil's ivy, and more. Although it looks like some varieties of philodendron, it is actually from an entirely different genus—the genus *Epipremnum*. Pothos plants are wonderful if you're looking to get your feet wet with houseplants but don't want something that is difficult to keep alive. So let's jump in and discuss this plant's needs.



# 1 | POTHOS

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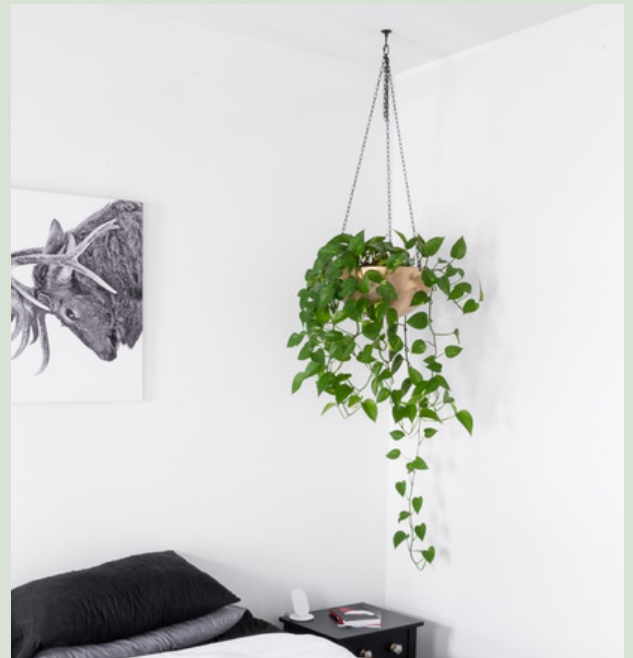


## DIFFERENT VARIETIES

Pothos varieties are generally stunning, lush-looking plants with shiny heart-shaped leaves and trailing vines in a variety of different colors and patterns. You can train the leaves to climb, hang the plants, or just put a pot of it on a shelf.

Different pothos plants have deep green, light green, yellow, and white patchy coloring. Some are even solid green. Marble Queen is probably the most common variety; it's also my favorite. The stunning leaves have a beautiful white and green pattern, and they're a bit shinier. Other varieties include Pearls and Jade, Silver Satin, and more.

All varieties are poisonous if ingested because of the calcium crystals, so it's a good idea to keep them away from pets and kids. That's why I have most of mine hanging from the ceiling or high up on shelving where nosy kitties and toddlers can't get to them. Luckily they look great hanging!



# 1 | POTHOS

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## LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Pothos plants can thrive in a variety of different lighting conditions from abundant sunlight to florescent lighting in a cubical. However, it will thrive in higher light conditions. My pothos plants by windows do the best.

Pothos varieties with patterns on the leaves (referred to as variegated plants) can lose their patterns and become all green if they don't get enough light. Leaves become pale when the plant is getting too much sun.

## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY NEEDS

Pothos will be happiest above 50° F, and they generally prefer a 60–80° room temperature. But they are adaptable. They aren't going to immediately die if your AC breaks and your house gets to 90° or beyond.

Pothos plants love high humidity and will flourish in it, but they also do just fine in low humidity. We run a humidifier in Ramona's room through the winter, and the pothos right above her crib did amazing! As did the pothos in our bathroom.



# 1 | POTHOS

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## WATERING YOUR POTHOS

Pothos plants aren't picky. I like to let mine tell me when they need water; they'll start drooping when they need a good drink, and I water immediately. They perk back up within a day. If you don't want to wait until they start drooping, let the soil dry out between waterings. This patient plant will forgive you.

Don't over-water. Pothos plants are prone to root rot from continuously damp soil. Leaves with black spots could indicate over-watering, but I've never had that happen. When I over-water, a couple of the leaves turn yellow. I pluck them off, apologize to the plant, and let it dry out before watering again!



# 1 | POTHOS

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## PEST PROBLEMS

Pothos plants are vulnerable to the common houseplant pests—mealybugs and fungus gnats, mostly. I have never had any problems with pests in my pothos. If you have problems, try backing off the watering, cleaning out the plant and surrounding soil with a water and dish soap mixture, and repotting in fresh, well-draining soil.

## SOIL NEEDS

Well-draining soil is the best choice because pothos plants are prone to root rot. I like to add a bit of perlite to my regular houseplant soil to encourage a bit more drainage. Ideally a planter with a drainage hole and saucer is best. However, almost all of my pothos plants are in hanging baskets or sitting high on shelves so they can trail down.

Because those planters don't have drainage holes, I add drainage by putting a layer of perlite or rocks to the bottom of the pot. This way, the roots are never sitting in water (root rot!). A lot of my DIY planters don't have holes and the plants are still thriving!

# 1 | POTHOS

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## FERTILIZING POTHOS PLANTS

Fertilizing isn't necessary for pothos plants—they'll do just fine without it. But they'll thrive if you occasionally give them some houseplant fertilizer. I give mine a little extra houseplant fertilizer boost every few months. I just use a liquid concentrate houseplant fertilizer.



## REPOTTING & PRUNING

Pothos plants don't like to be pot bound (when the roots fill the pot). If your plant is droopy even after watering, it probably needs more room. Transplant it to a bigger planter with fresh soil.

I don't prune my pothos plants a ton. I like to let them grow long and trail the vines along things in the house. The vines can grow 25+ feet long! However, much like long hair, it's only pretty if it's healthy. If the vines look long and scraggly (you'll hear them referred to as “leggy”), I cut them off.

# 1 | POTHOS

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## PROPAGATION

Growing or propagating pothos cuttings in water is simple and can help you make new plants from cuttings. Here's how.

Step 1: Cut a few pieces or strands from a plant. Remove leaves from the bottom to make room for new root growth.

Step 2: Stick the cut end of the pieces into a jar with water. The ends should be fully submerged.

Step 3: After a few weeks, you'll see new roots sprouting. Let the roots get a few inches long, then plant in fresh soil.

If it looks a bit weepy for a few days, don't panic. Sometimes plants need some time to rebound after being repotted, and this is a brand new plant, too!







# CHAPTER 2

# STRING OF PEARLS

## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### HOW TO CARE FOR STRING OF PEARLS

The string of pearls plant—or *Senecio rowleyanus*, and also referred to as a string of beads or string of peas plant—is a succulent with stunning strings of round, bead-like leaves. The leaves actually look a lot like green peas, but the long, skinny stems the leaves grow from make it look like a pearl necklace. A string of pearls plant is easy to care for if you give it the right growing conditions. If the plant is happy where it is, it will grow quickly and beautifully!

### LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

String of pearls plants need bright light, but they don't need bright light all day. As long as they receive a few hours a day of direct sunlight, they are fine with indirect sunlight the rest of the day. However, more direct sunlight will help them flourish! A window spot is the best choice for this succulent.



## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### SOIL NEEDS

Use a simple well-draining cactus or succulent potting mix. These soils differ from regular houseplant soil in that they facilitate drainage much faster through the addition of things like sand and perlite. Keep in mind that succulents are generally happiest when they have plenty of drainage via a hole in the bottom of their pot.

If you're wondering how to plant in pots without drainage holes, simply add a layer of small pebbles or perlite to the bottom of the planter. This drainage layer prevents the roots from sitting in wet soil if you over-water. Of course, you have to be extra careful not to over water when your planter doesn't have a drainage hole.



## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### WATERING YOUR STRING OF PEARLS

As a succulent, string of pearls plants do not need frequent watering. They can retain moisture in their round leaves quite well, so they need a good watering only 1–2 times a month. You can water them a bit more if the conditions are very hot and the soil is drying out quickly. In the winter, you can reduce this to once a month when they aren't actively growing.

Watering your string of pearls too frequently can lead to root rot. It's best to let the soil become dry before you water it again. If you wait too long to water, you might notice some wilting or flattening/shriveling of the leaves. This can usually be reversed with a good watering if the plant hasn't been suffering for too long.

### FERTILIZER NEEDS

I don't fertilize my string of pearls or any of my succulents, and they seem to be doing fine. However, you can fertilize yours with the rest of your houseplants during the active growing season (spring/summer) with a diluted houseplant fertilizer occasionally, and it won't harm it.



## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY NEEDS

String of pearls plants are not too picky about humidity and do well in average conditions. They generally tolerate a range of comfortable indoor room temperatures—from 55 to 85° F. It can live outdoors in the summer, but keep it in a shaded area during peak sun. Keep an eye on how it's doing and move it if necessary.

String of pearls plants do not tolerate the cold. Don't leave it outdoors once temperatures start dropping down into the low 50s. It will probably revolt and begin dropping leaves, which is not a cute look.

### HOW TO GET A STRING OF PEARLS TO BLOOM

String of pearls plants can bloom! Though, full disclosure, mine never have. If you keep your string of pearls in cooler temperatures during its winter resting season and cut back on water a bit, it may help to promote blooming in the spring. You can achieve cooler temperatures by keeping the string of pearls on a windowsill and away from heat registers; even if the window is closed, it's still likely one of the cooler spots in your home.

## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### REPOTTING & PRUNING

String of pearls plants can have a long, sleek look if you let their stems grow uninterrupted. They can grow to be 2–3 feet long and still look beautiful and healthy! However, if you'd like to encourage your plant to be fuller, you can stick the ends of stems back into the soil to create a little loop. String of pearls plants do not need to be pruned.

However, as with all houseplants, a little grooming never hurts! You can easily cut off any stems with leaves that don't look very healthy. It will not hurt the plant. You can also trim the ends of stems that are beginning to look scraggly.

You should repot your string of pearls when it becomes root bound. Repotting will help prolong the health of your plant by replenishing the depleted nutrients and giving it more room to grow. Make sure to use a well-draining soil as outlined above.

## 2 | STRING OF PEARLS

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### TOXICITY & PESTS

String of pearls is toxic to people and pets if ingested. It can cause drooling, vomiting, and diarrhea. No thanks. It should be kept out of reach and admired from afar by pets and children who might try to eat it for fun. These plants are not especially vulnerable to pests. However, they are vulnerable to common houseplant pests: fungus, mealybugs, and aphids. You can prevent many pest infections by controlling infections in nearby more vulnerable plants. You can also avoid over-watering.

### PROPAGATION

String of pearls can be easily propagating through rooting cuttings in water or in moist soil. They will begin to root quickly and sprout new growth. I wouldn't recommend propagating string of pearls through division of an existing plant. The plant's leaves can be fragile and separating the roots could shock it a bit.





# CHAPTER 3

# TRADESCANTIA

# ZERBINA



### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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## HOW TO CARE FOR A TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

Tradescantia zebrina (also known as a wandering dude, inchplant, or spiderwort) is a beautiful plant suitable for both indoor and outdoor (in many places) growth. Its leaves can range from stunning deep purple to green with silver stripes. It's a great, patient houseplant that is forgiving and hardy.

## WHERE DOES THE NAME COME FROM?

You'll likely hear this plant referred to as a "wandering jew" and wonder...is this offensive? I found a few resources I want to share before we talk about care tips. My take on this is strictly research-based because I am not a member of any religion. But I do always try to be mindful of others' preferences.

According to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "its name calls to mind Moses and the Israelites in the Sinai Desert, wandering for 40 years." Additionally, the Rabbi Dr. Raymond Apple who runs the website OzTorah answered a question about the name wandering jew, saying the plant bears the name because it "has a tendency to spread" and that this name was "probably given without conscious antisemitic malice." Apparently there is also a bird called a wandering jew!

### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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But here's where the origins get a little iffy. The story of The Wandering Jew is actually Christian-centric legend. The legend says that the Wandering Jew is a mythical immortal man who “taunted Jesus” en route to being crucified and was cursed to walk the Earth until the second coming. Taunting isn't cool, but eternal punishment seems extra harsh. According to OzTorah, “the underlying notion is that the Jews are destined to wander and be reviled because they rejected Jesus.” Oof.

### **WAIT, SO IS IT OK TO USE THE NAME?**

Everything I read from Jewish folks describing the connection to the plant seemed OK with it. The OzTorah website also says that the original story is unlikely to have had a specific connection with Jews—though some Christians have morphed it in to an antisemitic legend. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency website also says the following about the term “wandering jew”:

This motif of the wandering Jew also took form as an 1844 French novel, opera, and silent film which weren't anti-Semitic so much as straight-up depressing: A Jewish man is separated from his sister by the Bering Strait and condemned to wander the Earth forever. A plague of cholera follows in his wake, and—spoiler alert—he never finds his sister.

### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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So why, exactly, is a plant called this? Well...we're not totally sure. But most people assume that, like the mythical Wandering Jew character cursed to wander the Earth forever, the tradescantia zebrina plant has wandered all around the world.

That said, the houseplant hobbyist community has a growing movement to remove "wandering jew" from use, instead using "wandering dude." What do I think? I think it's a good idea, and it's always safest to call a plant by its actual name—tradescantia zebrina. So let's talk care!

### SOME PLANT VARIETIES

There are three major varieties of tradescantia plants you'll probably encounter. The most common is probably the Tradescantia Fluminensis, also known as the small-leaf spiderwort, wandering gypsy, and more. I don't have this variety, but it's a solid green variety with longer leaves.



### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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Tradescantia Zebrina is the most common variety you see indoors. It's the one with the deep purple, green, and silver markings. I have it in a few places in my home.

Finally, the Tradescantia Pallida (commonly known as purple queen and purple heart) is a striking deep purple variety with longer, pointer leaves. It is native to Mexico. I have it in my backyard hanging in a basket. I tried it indoors, but the lack of light led the plant to turn green.

All of these varieties are safe to have around kids and pets, but don't eat it. If your cats eat it, they'll be fine, but they'll probably barf because they're cats .





### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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## LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Bright indirect light is the best. However, the tradescantia zebrina plant can survive in very low light conditions. The lack of light will decrease the amount of purple, though. It takes a decent amount of sun to get the purple color, which is probably why my tradescantia zebrina hanging in a shady spot under our deck is much more vibrant than the one potted in the basement.

## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Indoors, it's fine everywhere. Yay for flexible houseplants for tricky rooms! Outdoors, the tradescantia zebrina plant will do fine in hot temperatures, but I keep mine in the shade. It will die under freezing, but unless it gets below 20° F, it will regrow (also called wintering over). The plant tolerates a variety of humidity levels.

## WATER & FERTILIZER NEEDS

The tradescantia zebrina plant is relatively patient with watering. It enjoys a good soak, but it doesn't like to be wet all the time. Let the soil get mostly dry before watering again. I usually just water when the top few inches feels dry. You also shouldn't water directly into the center of the plant. This can lead to rot.

### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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As with other houseplants, you can water less during the winter. But don't forget about it totally and let it become too dry—some of the leaves can turn brown and crispy, falling off of the stems and leaving bare spots. Not a cute look. Your tradescantia zebrina will thank you for a diluted houseplant fertilizer monthly during the warmer months. It grows quickly, so it will devour the food.

## PRUNING, GROOMING, & REPOTTING

This is where I think tradescantia zebrina plants are a bit harder than other houseplants: they need some help to stay pretty. They grow quickly and drop older leaves, which can leave the plant looking "stemmy" and spindly. This is especially a problem indoors where there isn't quick new growth to cover up the bald spots.

These plants do not age well. You can help yours look beautiful by starting new smaller plants in the same pot as the aging plant (see the propagation section). You can also just cut a plant down to the soil and use the cuttings to just create a totally new plant.

They grow quickly and need frequent repotting. But their stems are ridiculously fragile. I don't even know how this plant stays alive sometimes. Be prepared to lose some of it when you repot.

### 3 | TRADESCANTIA ZEBRINA

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## PROPAGATION

Luckily, though, this plant is incredibly easy to propagate from cuttings. There are three ways to do it. The first is by cutting off long stems and burying them in fresh, moist soil. The cuttings will begin to root, and you'll probably see new growth within a few weeks.

The second way is by rooting cuttings in water. I love seeing the new root growth when propagating in water. I find the new roots grow quicker in water than pothos roots do, for example.

The third way to grow a new tradescantia zebrina plant from cuttings is to take cuttings and lay them on top of moist soil. The little node areas should have contact with the soil. You could sprinkle a thin layer of soil on top of the joints as well. Roots will begin to form after a while if you keep the area moist but not sopping wet.





# CHAPTER 4

# SNAKE PLANT



## 4 | SNAKE PLANT



### HOW TO TAKE CARE OF A SNAKE PLANT

The snake plant, or *Sansevieria trifasciata*, is a striking plant with a variety of different patterns and color variations. It's one of the absolute easiest plants to care for. There are many different snake plant species—about 70. Some snake plants are dark green with whitish stripes—both vertical and horizontal—while others have yellow edges or a red tint. Some are lighter green, while others are quite dark. “Twist” varieties have twisted leaves. Depending on the variety, snake plants can grow up to several feet tall. The yellow-edge, red-tinted, and twisted varieties tend to not grow as tall. All varieties are poisonous to pets. However, my cats don't bother them, so I don't worry about having them in the house.



## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

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### LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

I have a snake plant in almost every room in my house because it tolerates and can even thrive in a variety of different conditions. Snake plants tolerate everything from low to high light. You'll sometimes see them indoors in doctors offices. You'll also see it outside in areas that get a lot of sun all year round, like Florida.

While I find that my snake plants in high-, indirect-light areas grow the fastest, my snakes in low-light areas also do very well. I have snake plants in our bedroom, Ramona's nursery, and the living room—all spots that get great light. But I also have them in lower light areas like our kitchen and lower level.

### WATERING REQUIREMENTS

The only thing snake plants are picky about is water. I generally water mine once every week and a half-ish. During periods that are cold and dry, you need to water only about once a month. Let the soil dry out completely between watering. Over-watering can lead to root rot and can kill a snake plant. I can't stress this enough. If you typically forget to water your plants, snake plants are perfect for you!

## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

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### TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Snake plants do well in a variety of humidity and temperature conditions. But they are best suited for an environment that stays above 50° F. They don't tolerate frost well, and cold temperatures can lead to scarring on their leaves that cannot be reversed.

### PEST PROBLEMS

Snake plants are vulnerable to the run-of-the-mill houseplant pests: mealybugs, spider mites, and fungus gnats. You can simply wipe off spider mites and treat mealybugs with rubbing alcohol. Fungus gnats are a bit trickier and can be treated using a concentrated solution of dish soap and water. Taking the plant out of the pot, giving it a good soapy soak, and repotting with fresh dry soil should help. If you have a particularly bad infestation, you can try an insect control formula made for houseplants or sticky stakes.



## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

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### SOIL NEEDS

Any well-draining cactus or succulent soil will do. I also use a lightweight houseplant soil with some perlite and peat moss added to it. Because snake plants prefer well-draining soil and are prone to root rot, having a planter with a hole and drainage saucer is best. However, I have them in a variety of planters without holes. For those planters, I simply add a layer of perlite or pebbles to the bottom of the pot (bigger pots get a thicker layer). This ensures the roots aren't sitting in a puddle of water.

### GROWTH RATE & FERTILIZER

The most popular varieties you're likely to find in stores grow to be around 2 feet, with some surpassing 3 feet. The cylindrical snake plant can grow up to 7 feet. Generally snake plants grow slower indoors. However, sunlight can help them grow faster.

As for fertilizer, I give all of my snake plants a bit of my concentrated liquid indoor houseplant fertilizer. I fertilize every month or so during the warmer months—just when I'm doing my normal watering. However, it isn't necessary to fertilize them—I just like giving all of the gang a little love.



## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

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### HOW TO REPOT

Unlike a lot of houseplants, snake plants love to be pot bound, so they don't necessarily need to be repotted frequently. I don't repot my snake plants until they look way too big for the pot they're in. I also repot when I am dividing my snake plants. Because they can grow very quickly under the right conditions, you may need to divide your snake plants every year or so.

Repotting a snake plant is just like any other plant. I think it's easier because the leaves are so much sturdier. Simply take the plant out of its pot and gently knock off all of the loose dirt. Then put a layer of soil down in the new pot, set the plant in, and add fresh well-draining soil, covering the roots. I like to plant my snakes a bit deeper so the taller leaves have a lot of support. And since snake plants like to be pot bound, use a pot that is only a bit bigger.

### PROPAGATION

The first way to propagate snake plants is by rhizome. Rhizomes are the whiteish root-like stem structures that connect the mother plant to its new babies. The rhizomes spread just above or below ground and sprout new plants.

## 4 | SNAKE PLANT



I've taken a few pics of a small rhizome starting to sprout from the mother plant below. To propagate a snake plant by rhizome, use a clean, sharp knife to cut the rhizome off of the main plant. Let the rhizome callous over for a few days before planting it.



If you have a very large snake plant, the best method is likely to propagate it by division. This is similar to propagating it by rhizome and is the method I used recently on my very large snake plant in the living room. To divide a plant, take the entire plant out on a tarp in the living room, brush off the dirt, and find the largest connection by rhizome. Simply cut the plant in half at the main rhizome and gently separate all of the roots. Then I replant them. (The best practice is to wait a few days for the fresh cuts to harden over a bit, but it isn't totally necessary.)

## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

Propagating a snake plant in water is another option. This method is easiest but generally takes the longest. I like to propagate snake plant cuttings by rooting them in water when one plant has a wonky leaf I want to snip off. I simply cut the leaf off down near the soil and put it in water. Mason jars or vases are both good options, especially since the cuttings can sometimes be top heavy. I keep mine in indirect light and change the water every week or so. Plant the cutting when roots sprout.





## 4 | SNAKE PLANT

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To propagate using cuttings, snip a leaf off of an existing plant near the soil line. Then cut that leaf in to smaller pieces. It's very important to keep track of which end was the bottom; they won't grow if you put the top end down in the soil. Let the cut leaves callus over for a few days, then plant each cutting with the right end down in well-draining soil.

They'll begin to root, but it can take a month or so and then another month for new leaf growth. It's a cheap way to start tons of new plants!







# CHAPTER 5

# PEPEROMIA

# 5 | PEPEROMIA

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## HOW TO CARE FOR PEPEROMIA

I'm surprised at how much I don't see people recommending peperomia plants. They are patient, forgiving, and adorable, and with over 1,500 species, you're sure to find something you like. And pet parents rejoice—these are not poisonous to pets, so you don't have to get creative with keeping them out of reach.

Peperomias are lovely small plants with a variety of beautiful leaves. “Peperomia” is the scientific name. Since there are so many varieties, you'll probably see a sign saying something like “various peperomia” at your nursery. You might have heard varieties referred to by the names radiator plants or baby rubber plants.

## MOST COMMON VARIETIES

There are loads of different varieties of Peperomia. Here are four of the most common varieties you might see at your local nursery.

1. *Peperomia Obtusifolia*: This variety is often called the baby rubber plant because the plants have leaves with a smooth, rubbery look to them. And the plants stay quite small, unlike other plants with leaves like these. Leaves are often variegated with greens and yellows.

## 5 | PEPEROMIA

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2. Peperomia Argyreia (aka watermelon peperomia) is a beautiful variety with circular-shaped leaves. The leaves are smooth and shiny looking with gray/silverish “stripes” that give the leaves a watermelon-like pattern.

3. Peperomia Clusifolia (aka red edge or rainbow peperomia) has beautiful succulent-looking leaves with variegated with greens and yellows and red edging. It looks very similar to the baby rubber plant variety.



4. Peperomia Caperata, or ripple peperomia, is the variety I see the most at local nurseries labeled “assorted peperomia.” The leaves have a crinkly texture and a bit of a waxy look. Some varieties have leaves with a red tint (red luna), some have a grayish tint, and some of a bold green color (emerald ripple).



# 5 | PEPEROMIA

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## SOIL & WATER NEEDS

Peperomia plants enjoy a potting soil that is both well-aerated and well-draining. I have two planted in a well-draining succulent mix with some peat moss added, and they're both doing really well. Using a good soil will help protect the roots from rot and give them some extra air.

This plant evidently does best when watered from its roots. To do this, sit your pot in a pan of water for 5 minutes every week or so. But—full disclosure—I do not do that and mine have been fine. Just avoid watering directly into the crown of the plant. You should also let the soil dry out before you water your peperomia again. Peperomia plants have thick, juicy-looking leaves that store water, much like succulents. Oh, and you can give them a normal houseplant fertilizer while they are actively growing.

## LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Peperomia is flexible with light as long as you don't have it in an extremely dark or extremely bright area. Anywhere with low-to-medium, medium, or medium-to-high light is fine. Peperomia pals can also grow under fluorescent lights.



# 5 | PEPEROMIA

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## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY NEEDS

Most peperomia varieties you'll find at your local nursery will do well in a variety of normal household temperatures. Don't let these plants be exposed to cold or drafts from windows; give them a stable home. Since they first grew in rainforests, peperomia plants enjoy humidity, so give them a spritz or water here and there!

## POTTING, PRUNING, & FERTILIZING

These plants enjoy being pot-bound, so don't hurry to repot your peperomia as soon as it grows a bit. Especially since their root system is shallow, they can do well in smaller indoor pots or dishes. You generally shouldn't have to re-pot peperomia since the plants stay fairly small and like being cozy.

However, you can prune your peperomia by pinching or snipping off pieces at the stem. The stem will sprout new growth at the nearest node below the cut. Like a lot of similar low-maintenance plants, peperomia will thank you for occasional fertilizer, but they aren't heavy feeders. Just your run-of-the-mill houseplant fertilizer will work well. I use a concentrated fertilizer with a dropper that I dilute in a watering can.

# 5 | PEPEROMIA

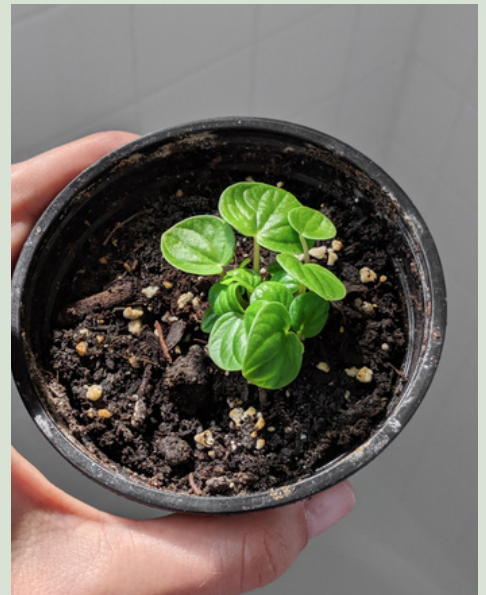
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## PROPAGATION

You can propagate peperomia plants one of two ways: by division or by cutting. To propagate by division, simply cut the plant into smaller pieces, making sure each new piece has sufficient root systems. Then plant in their own containers and take care of them as normal.

To propagate by cutting, cut off a leaf and stem, plant it, and water it enough to keep it damp. You can cover it with a plastic bag to retain moisture and humidity, but make sure to take it off every so often to circulate air. Replant once new growth emerges and the new plant roots and forms.





# CHAPTER 6

# MONSTERA

# 6 | MONSTERA



## HOW TO CARE FOR MONSTERA PLANTS

What kind of plant loving blogger would I be if I didn't have a post about caring monstera deliciosa? The stunning monstera, sometimes also referred to as the swiss cheese plant, is native to Central America and can help turn any suburban home into a tropical oasis. (I would know.) They are also non-toxic to cats and dogs, so bonus points for the pet parents.

## IS IT A SPLIT-LEAF PHILODENDRON?

No! This stumped me for a while. The first monstera deliciosa plant I bought was actually labeled as a "split leaf philodendron." But although the monstera deliciosa is part of the same family (Araceae) as philodendron, they are totally different plants. The monstera deliciosa belongs to the monstera genus, while philodendron plants belong to the philodendron genus.

The two plants are often confused for one another when it comes to naming conventions, probably because the monstera deliciosa does have some similarities in appearance with the lacey tree philodendron (philodendron bipinnatifidum), which also has a split-leaf look. Nevertheless, they are totally different plants.



# 6 | MONSTERA

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## LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

This monstera plant is famous for the holes in its leaves—holes that sometimes grow so large as the leaf grows that they split the leaf. The leaves have this pattern as a way of adapting to harsh conditions in the rainforest—think heavy rain and whatnot.

But although the tropical *monstera deliciosa* comes from the rainforest, it's a perfectly adaptable plant that grows quite well indoors as a houseplant. Monsteras thrive in bright, indirect sunlight. Don't keep this plant in a room that gets only a bit of sunlight. I have mine in a corner of a room that gets decent light in the morning and indirect bright light all afternoon.



# 6 | MONSTERA

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## WATERING & SOIL NEEDS

Monsteras are fairly low maintenance when it comes to watering. While they are actively growing during the spring and summer, you should water them as soon as the soil dries out. It wouldn't hurt if you forget, but watering promptly will help to encourage new growth. Like other houseplants, you only need to water once every few weeks in the winter.

The monstera tolerates most houseplant soils. I have mine in a well-draining indoor potting soil. If you don't have a drainage hole in your pot, build some drainage in using perlite so the roots aren't sitting in water. You can also help to avoid this problem by not overwatering. Generally, if your plant's top 2 inches of soil are dry, it needs a drink. You can add a bit of houseplant fertilizer once a month or so during the spring and summer to encourage growth.

## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

Because it originates from the rainforest, the monstera deliciosa likes warmer temperatures. It adapts well to most normal home temperatures. It will not be happy in the cold, though. It likes high humidity but will do well with average household humidity.

## 6 | MONSTERA

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If you don't want to increase the humidity of your entire room or home, you can mist the leaves to help retain moisture. Occasionally on humid summer days, I set my monstera just outside on the patio to get a bit of nice heat and humidity.

However, don't yank this plant around too much by drastically changing up its conditions. You can usually keep a stable environment for your monstera by just avoiding heat or cooling registers in the home. Low humidity or harsh forced air from HVAC registers can lead to browning tips on the leaves.

### **PRUNING, REPOTTING, & TRAINING**

The best way to prune an unruly monstera is to cut back stems at the nodes in the spring. As your plant grows, you'll want to repot it every year or so. If you're caring for it perfectly and it is otherwise not doing great (e.g., brown-tipped leaves), it may be unhappily potbound and need a bigger home. The monstera has aerial roots to help support the plant as it grows. If you do nothing with the roots, the plant will spread out as it grows, needing a big space. If you'd like to train your monstera to grow tall, however, you need to plant it with a moss pole. This will give the aerial roots something to grab on to for support.

# 6 | MONSTERA

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## PROPAGATION

Propagating your monstera from cuttings is easy. In the spring or summer, cut a leaf and stem at the node. You can either plant the cutting in moist soil and keep moist until it begins rooting, or you can put the cuttings in water. The cuttings should root in either moist soil or water in just a few weeks.



## WILL IT GROW FRUIT?

Even if you follow all of these care tips, your plant probably won't grow fruit. Especially if you're growing it as a houseplant. That's because the plants must flower before growing fruit, and they rarely flower indoors. But, you never know. If you're growing the *monstera deliciosa* outdoors in an area that mimics the plants natural habitat, you may be lucky enough to have your plant flower and fruit.





# CHAPTER 7

# PHILODENDRON

# 7 | PHILODENDRON

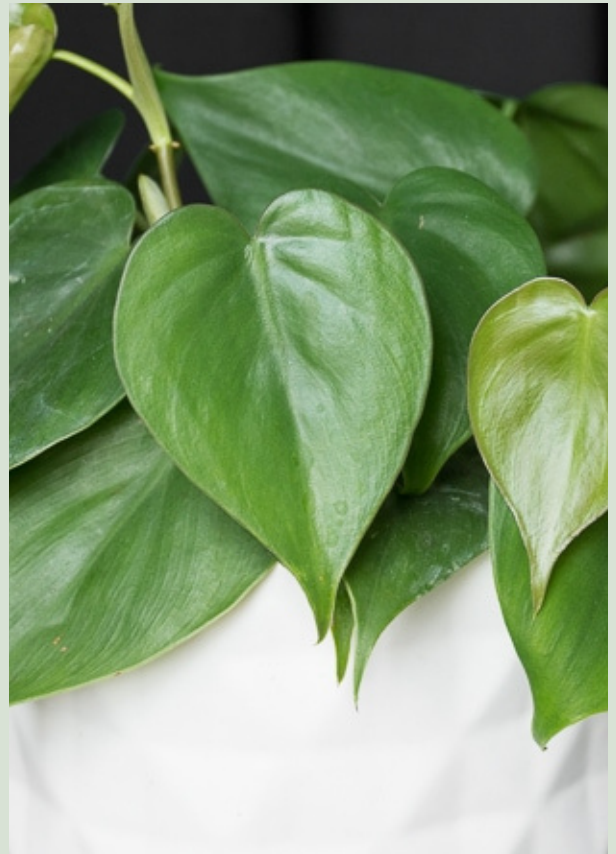
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## HOW TO CARE FOR PHILODENDRON

Philodendrons are durable, patient, and tolerant of your plant misgivings. Philodendron is actually name of a large genus of plants in the Araceae family. In fact, it's the second-largest genus in the family. The most common houseplant Philodendron variety is probably the heart-leaf Philodendron, or *Philodendron hederaceum*. This plant is often confused with the pothos plant.

They share a similar leaf shape, but they are totally different plants. Pothos plants typically have very shiny, waxy-looking leaves. The heart-leaf Philodendron leaves have a more matte finish. One cool thing about Philodendrons is that they have juvenile leaves and adult leaves. The plant gradually morphs from juvenile to adult over its life, so you probably won't notice. However, it's a trait that has made differentiating between different species difficult.



# 7 | PHILODENDRON



## TYPES & VARIETIES

There are two main types of Philodendron plants: vining/trailing plants and non-climbers that grow up and out. Heart-leaf is an example of a type that will vine or trail and looks likely in a hanging basket. The Fiddle-Leaf Philodendron (which is not a fiddle-leaf fig) and Xanadu Philodendron are examples of plants that grow up and out—in fact, they can grow two times as wide as they do tall.

Philodendrons have both aerial and subterranean roots. Aerial roots grow from the plant's nodes and help the plant attach itself to things and collect nutrients. Subterranean roots are what you typically think of when you think of plant roots. Aerial roots help the climbing varieties climb. You can attach them to something like a pole or twine to help the plant climb. Likewise, you can put the stem and aerial root back into the pot and cover with a bit of soil. This will re-root and begin to grow, giving the plant a fuller appearance.



# 7 | PHILODENDRON

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## LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Philodendrons generally prefer medium light and thrive in bright, indirect sunlight. They are well-known for their ability to tolerate low light, but they won't thrive. As with pothos plants, leaves might develop smaller, and the stems might become leggier and sparse. Too much direct sunlight will burn the leaves. Find yourself a sunny window and you'll be good to go.

## TEMPERATURE & HUMIDITY

These plants do well in a variety of normal home humidity levels. Misting your little lovelies with a water bottle will promote growth by adding a bit of humidity, though. You can give your Philodendron a bit of fertilizer while it's actively growing during the spring, summer, and fall. Philodendrons also do well in normal home temperatures. They won't do well the colder it gets and will die under freezing.

## ROOTS, SOIL, & WATER

Watering is easy. You should let the soil dry out between watering. Don't over-water and avoid soggy soil—one tell-tale sign of over-watering is the leaves turning yellow and drooping. Under-watering? Leaves browning, crinkling, and falling off.



# 7 | PHILODENDRON

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You can give your Philodendron a bit of fertilizer while it's actively growing during the spring, summer, and fall. All Philodendrons like well-draining soil. Philodendron friends also like to be snug in their pots. Don't plant them in pots that are too big. When their roots become really compact, re-home them into something a few inches bigger. Good drainage is critical to Philodendron health. Use a well-draining, high-quality potting soil.

## TOXICITY

Philodendron toxicity risk in children is low, and fatal poisoning is extremely rare. One study of 127 children found only one child showed mild side effects. Opinions about toxicity in cats are also mixed. As with most plants, it's probably best to keep them away from your kitties and little kids. Thankfully many Philodendrons look beautiful hanging out of reach.



# 7 | PHILODENDRON

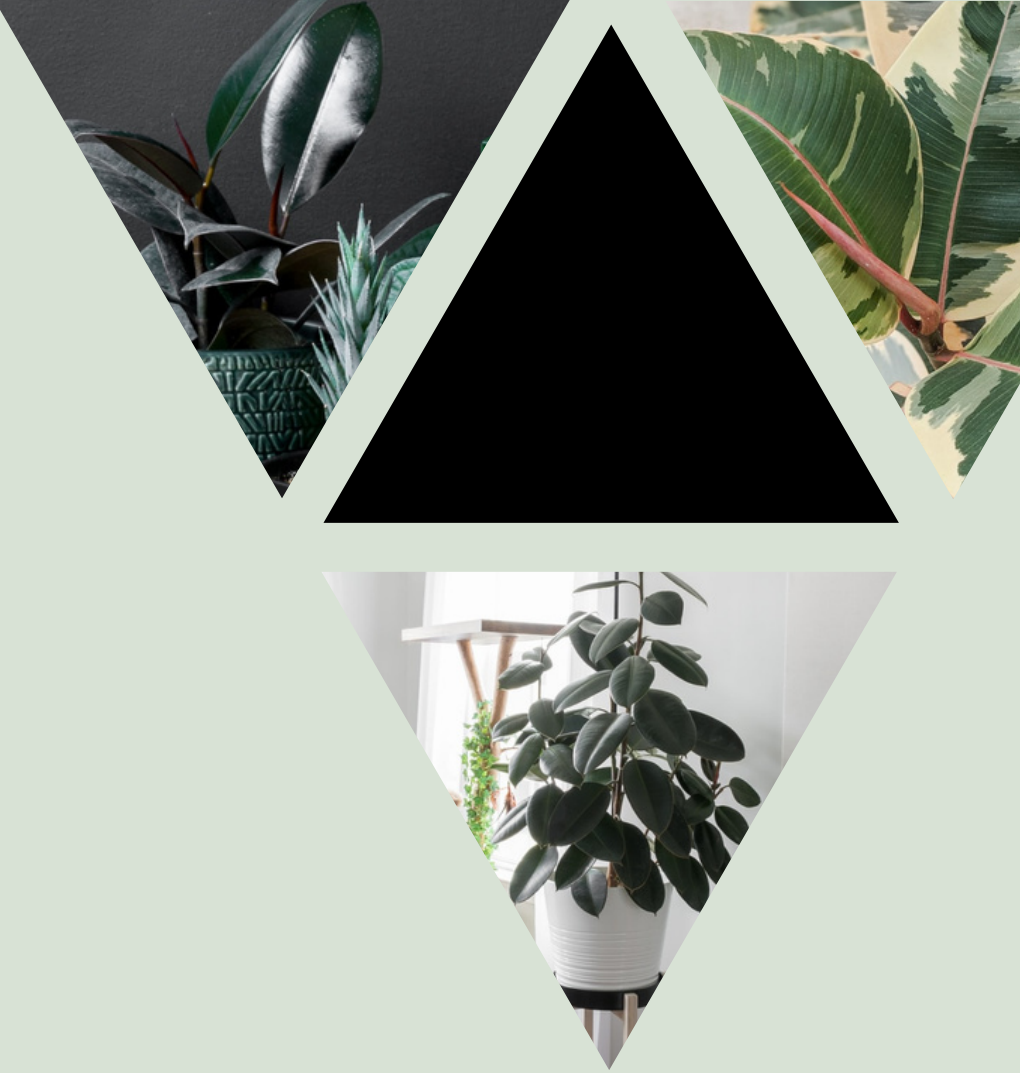
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## PROPAGATION

Philodendron propagation is pretty easy but can differ depending on the plant type. Methods include rooting stem cuttings, air layering, and removing babies from a parent plant. To propagate by cuttings, cut a stem with a few nodes on it and stick it down in to a small pot with sandy soil. You can also remove babies (offsets) from their mother plants to create new plants. Wait until the baby has its own sufficient root system, though.

If you're propagating a trailing variety, you can grow roots by putting the cutting in a jar of water. They can also successfully root at a node that comes into contact with soil. Take a stem from an existing plant—don't cut it off—and lay it over another pot with soil in it. Gently bury the node areas and water. After 1–2 months, it should root. You can then cut the stem to separate the two plants.



## CHAPTER 8

# RUBBER PLANT

## 8 | RUBBER PLANT

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### HOW TO CARE FOR A RUBBER PLANT

The rubber plant (aka *Ficus elastica* or rubber fig) is a beautiful and bold houseplant with glossy green rubbery looking leaves—some quite large. Rubber plants come in different varieties, and some can even grow up to 10 feet in a container! Some varieties have branches that spread out more. While most have green leaves, some have red-tinted or variegated pattern leaves.

Rubber plants like to be pot-bound, and like other houseplants, the best time to repot them is in the spring. However, I repotted my very large rubber plant this past winter because I couldn't wait any longer. It had completely outgrown its pot and really needed more space. It is still doing great! These plants are considered mildly toxic and should be kept away from pets and children.





## 8 | RUBBER PLANT

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### WATERING NEEDS

Rubber plants don't require a lot of water. Over-watering is one of the main things you should avoid. If the plant's leaves begin drooping and turning yellow, you're probably over-watering. (But don't worry if this just happens occasionally; it's normal for aging leaves to drop off.)

If your plant gets thirsty, its leaves will begin looking soft, which is a noticeable change from the firm, shiny leaves of a healthy plant. Try not to let it get this thirsty. It doesn't absolutely need to be fertilized, but you can house a diluted houseplant fertilizer monthly during the spring and summer when the plant is active and needy.

Rubber plants tolerate dry soil very well. This is a good plant for you if you have a harder time remembering to water. You can even let its soil dry out completely between waterings and it will be fine. You can water less when its in a cooler spot with lower light.

### SOIL NEEDS

Rubber plants enjoy well-draining, well-aerated (something with peat moss) soil and a pot with a drainage hole since they are prone to root rot.

## 8 | RUBBER PLANT

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### LIGHT, TEMPERATURE, & HUMIDITY

I have my large rubber plant in a medium indirect light area, and it's still growing like a weed. They are forgiving when it comes to temperature and humidity, too. Rubber plants do well in a range of normal household temperatures but do appreciate warmth during the day. Shoot for at least 50° F and no colder. They like normal household humidity levels, and they like to get comfortable in one space. Abruptly changing lighting conditions or temperature can shock your plant, causing it to drop leaves.

### PRUNING, PESTS, & CLEANING

To prune, use shears to cut just above a node. A node is where a leaf grows out of a stem or where a stem grows out of another stem. New growth will eventually begin to appear from the node below the cut. If you'd like to encourage your rubber plant to grow out, cut off the main stem's tip to encourage side branch growth.

Normal household plant pets can infest the rubber plant (mealybugs, etc.), but they aren't especially vulnerable. It can, however, develop sooty mold, which is a black dusty mold that can grow on leaves. Remove it by wiping the leaves with a diluted dish soap mixture.

## 8 | RUBBER PLANT

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Since these leaves are large and shiny, they can be dust magnets. They also very clearly show water spots. Keep your leaves beautiful by wiping them down with a damp cloth—a microfiber cloth will help prevent water spots.

### PROPAGATION

Rubber plants can be propagated by their stem. Simply cut them off at the desired point (remember the bit about how they grow back through nodes), and then stick that cutting into damp soil. Using a rooting hormone powder will help the plant root. Keep the soil damp and humidity levels high.

You can do this by making a mini greenhouse using a clear gallon bag. Make sure you let them air out every few days or they'll begin to mold. Rubber plants can also be propagated through air layering.






# AND THAT'S A WRAP!

For more plant care tips, propagation guides, and DIY planter ideas, visit me at my blog, [bybrittanygoldwyn.com](http://bybrittanygoldwyn.com).

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