

ARTICLE.



PLANT CARE GUIDE



INTRO

Darryl Chang wants to change the way we care for plants. His Instagram handle [@houseplantjournal](#) was born of a desire to offer more thoughtful instructions on how to live with and care for plants. To Darryl, plants aren't simply decoration: they are a biological curiosity that you live with. Rather than depend on generic instructions from a mass-produced care-label, Darryl aims to educate his readers on how to establish an intuitive relationship with their plants.



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GLOSSARY

In his quest to offer more intuitive instructions for plant care, Darryl relies on the following phrases to better communicate his plant care philosophies.

WIDEST POSSIBLE VIEW OF THE SKY (WPVS)

Ever read the phrase “bright indirect light” and wondered “what does that MEAN”? Darryl too. Darryl came up with “WPVS” to explain that plants need to be right near a window to flourish. The bigger your window, the better.

TOLERABLE

As much as we try to be super specific about light, a plant will do well in a huge range of light levels. Darryl uses the word “tolerable” to communicate a condition that will require a bit of monitoring, but that your plant is likely getting what it needs.

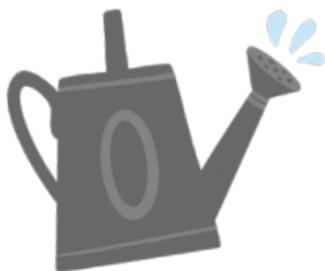


GLOSSARY

SOIL DAMPNESS LEVELS

Over and under watering can mean death for a plant. Rather than rely on a weekly watering schedule, Darryl advises to assess the soil dampness before adding more water to one of your plants. Plants don't adhere to a schedule.

WET SOIL	PARTIALLY DRY	COMPLETELY DRY
<p>Black, wet to touch, slightly sticky.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Do not add more water.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Make sure that your pot has proper drainage in order to avoid root-rot.</p>	<p>Brown, dry to touch.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Safe to add a touch of water.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Watch how your plant responds — if it perks up, it is thankful for the water. If nothing changes, wait until the soil is drier next time.</p>	<p>Light-brown and craggy: soil may be separating into rocky chunks.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Dry to touch.</p> <p>—</p> <p>Add water in 2-3 additions, being careful to not let plant sit in standing water.</p>



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SNAKE PLANT

COMMON NAME

Snake Plant, Mother-in-law's tongue.

BOTANICAL NAME

Dracaena trifasciata.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 0-4 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is completely dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

You've probably been told that this plant "thrives in low light." In reality, low light will kill a Snake plant very slowly. Rather than a windowless corner, place your Snake plant in a bright space that doesn't get a lot of direct sun.

PRO-TIP

Snake plants are tough — so tough they are known to break their pots. If your Snake plant is getting beefy, divide your plant by cutting the root section in half, and re-potting the sections in two pots. With adequate light, the foliage will fill in within a year.



MONEY TREE

COMMON NAME

Money tree plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Pachira aquatica.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-3 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is partially dry; tolerates drought.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

As the Money Tree grows taller, new leaves grow at the top and the lower leaves will turn brown and fall off. This is normal. Simply clean up the fallen leaves to keep your Money Tree looking prosperous. If your plant gets too tall, you can prune the plant back to the main trunk. Even with no leaves, so long as the roots are healthy, the plant will put out new growth.

PRO-TIP

If your Money Tree was grown as four braided trunks, you can prune the leaves back two trunks at a time.



MONSTERA

COMMON NAME

Split-leaf philodendron.

BOTANICAL NAME

Monstera deliciosa.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 0-4 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is partially dry; tolerates drought.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Monstera let you know when they are happy. Given the right lighting conditions, the Monstera will quickly outgrow its pot. To encourage a tall silhouette and more “swiss cheese” style cuts in your Monstera, install a metal trellis and tie your vines towards the ceiling.

PRO-TIP

Like its smaller cousin the Pothos, the Monstera is easy to propagate. Simply cut a section of the main vine below the leaf node (the “V” where the leaf and main stem meet), and place it in a vase of water. After a few weeks, a new root will emerge from the cut, which you can then plant in a pot with well-drained soil.



CALATHEA

COMMON NAME

Prayer plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

There are numerous species within the Calathea genus.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky, but block direct sun with a white sheer curtain.

WATERING NEEDS

Keep the soil evenly moist.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

A common challenge is leaf edges turning brown. Realistically, there's no way to prevent this once a leaf is older than a few months. Rather than get hung up on the "grays," embrace your Calathea's graceful ageing process.

PRO-TIP

Calatheas often die back completely, leaving behind nothing but a pot of soil. While most people assume that this = death, try repotting the roots into fresh soil and give them adequate light and watering. There's a chance new leaves will emerge!



SPIDER PLANT

COMMON NAME

Spider plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Chlorophytum comosum.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-4 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is partially dry. The foliage will turn slightly more pale when the soil is critically dry: this is a sign to water immediately!

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

A Spider plant's older leaves will eventually get brown tips: this is as natural as getting laugh lines. If you are bothered by browning tips, you can safely trim them back. If your plant is getting good light and being watered accordingly, you'll experience new leaf growth with fresh, pointed tips.

PRO-TIP

Spider plants tend to push out "babies" once the mother plant has grown fully into its current pot. When you're selecting a planter for your Spider plant, choose something snug to encourage some plant-baby action.



HOYA PLANT

COMMON NAME

Wax plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

There are many species within the Hoya genus.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-4 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is completely dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Some species grow rather slowly: be patient or buy the size of plant you desire right away.

PRO-TIP

Hoya can be propagated by stem cuttings. Root them in water then transfer them to soil.



JADE PLANT

COMMON NAME

Jade plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Crassula ovata.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 3-4 hours of direct sun preferred.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is completely dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Depending on the light, time between necessary waterings can be up to several weeks. In that time, the soil may become hard and compacted. Prior to watering, gently break up hardened soil with a fork or chopstick: water will penetrate the soil more evenly, making for a much happier plant.

PRO-TIP

Regular pruning of the growing tips will encourage branching and bushy-ness. When pruning, look to cut back single stems that have become long and lanky. After several years, the result will be a pleasing tree-like shape.



ZZ PLANT

COMMON NAME

ZZ plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Zamioculcas zamiifolia.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-3 hours of direct sun is tolerable.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is completely dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

The ZZ plant is another “low light” favorite... but only because it appears to be fine for a long time before it eventually collapses. Provide the ZZ plant at least some view of the sky and it will reward you by staying alive (and even thriving!) for many years.

PRO-TIP

If you'd like to divide your ZZ plant, separate its underground tubers and repot in well-drained soil. These tubers are the water reserves for the plant, which allow the plant to tolerate long periods of drought.



RUBBER TREE

COMMON NAME

Rubber plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Ficus elastica.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-3 hours of direct sun preferred.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is mostly dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

When the rubber plant gets adequate light, it can quickly grow too tall and become unmanageable. Don't be afraid to prune it back.

PRO-TIP

You can propagate the top section of a rubber plant by cutting it off and rooting it in water. Once roots appear, transfer the plant to a pot full of well-drained soil.



CHINESE MONEY PLANT

COMMON NAME

Chinese money plant.

BOTANICAL NAME

Pilea peperomioides.

LIGHT NEEDS

Widest possible view of the sky + 2-3 hours of direct sun preferred.

WATERING NEEDS

Water when soil is partially dry.

PLANT NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

When grown indoors, the Pilea's leaves make take on a slightly domed shape. To counter this, give your Pilea as wide a view of the sky as possible — over time, those leaves will flatten out.

PRO-TIP

Once the plant reaches about 6-7 inches in height, it may start producing miniature versions of itself called “pups” near its stem base. Once those pups have grown to an inch tall with two or three leaves, you can cut them from the mother plant and transplant them into their own pots. It's best to start with a small pot (two-three inches in diameter) and move up as the plant gets larger.