

# How to Care for your Dracena

The original botanical name for this plant was "Dracæna" — but that's been Americanized to "Dracena." The Dracena family consists of a number of species native to tropical regions of Africa and Australia. They make ideal houseplants in bright to moderate light locations and their foliage can be quite dramatic.

In their native habitat, these are evergreen shrubs with wiry stems that may reach a height of ten feet. As new growth occurs, older growth can discolor, going yellow or brown. If this happens, you can remove it, which will leave an interesting ringed effect on the main trunk of the plant.

Since these are tropical plants, they are quite happy if you'll let them "summer" outside here, but they must be brought indoors before the weather cools substantially. Once night temperatures are over 50F it's safe to move them outdoors. To avoid sunburn on the leaves that can cause irreversible discoloration, gradually transition your Dracena from a shady area to a sunnier spot over the course of a week or two.

## Planting

You can get the best growth from your Dracena if you'll plant it in a well-drained potting soil (almost any commercial potting mix works fine). Water only as necessary to prevent wilting.

## Fertilizing

Feel free to fertilize your Dracena two to four times during its active growth periods in spring and summer. A balanced liquid-formula houseplant food will be your best choice.

## Problems

This is not a fussy or demanding plant. About the only problem you'll encounter with Dracena is a leaf spot fungus, which can be caused by watering at night (outdoors) or dripping of excessive water onto the leaves. The solution is simple: don't let the foliage stay damp. Dracena can also develop a few insect pests, with mealy bug and spider mite being the most common. Any insecticide labeled for houseplants that will treat these pests can be used.



## FUN FACT:

Dracenas are in the Asparagus family and are also related to Lily-of-the-Valley and monkey grass (Liriope).

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## **Varieties**

Some of the better-known include Dracena Marginata (multiple stemmed plant with stiff lance-shaped leaves with a green margin); Dracena 'Colorama' (same as Marginata, with multicolored striped leaves); Reflexa (short, dark green arching leaves with many stems); 'Janet Craig' (graceful arching green leaves with several main stems); 'Janet Craig Compacta' (like 'Janet Craig' but much smaller); and Dracena sanderiana (slender stems with white-striped leaves).



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