

ACALYPHA

Copperleaf, Chenille Plant, Red-Hot Cat's Tail

Originally from New Guinea the Acalypha was introduced to greenhouse gardeners in 1896. These plants are grown for the interesting copper hue of the leaves or hanging flowers. The flowers are bright crimson, lack petals and hang down in long slender tassels. This plant has been considered a symbol of longevity.

Light

The Acalypha needs a bright, filtered light situation. During the bright summer months, protect from direct sun with a sheer curtain. During the winter months, place in the brightest location available. Keep away from excessive heat and draught.

Temperature

The Acalypha must be kept indoors during the winter months. In summer it can go outside provided it is in a shady, sheltered spot. In winter the plant should be kept in a well-lit position. Excessive heat (over 22C or 70F) can cause damage if the soil is not kept cool and moist. Until the red or cream tails appear, the plant should be sprayed with a fine mist 2-3 times a week.

Water

The temperature should not be below 60F (15C). Keep the soil moist, but never allow the plant to stand in water. A humid atmosphere is beneficial. Your plant may be misted daily, or to increase humidity, place the plant on a saucer of pebbles with water, keeping the water below the surface of the pebbles. As the water evaporates it will increase the humidity. Replenish water as needed. Ensure that the pot does not sit in water; this will cause the roots to rot.

Fertilizer

The Acalypha should be given a water-soluble fertilizer such as 20-20-20 once a month at the manufacturer's recommended rate.

Repotting

Like all houseplants the Acalypha does not like to be planted in too large a container. The Acalypha can be re-potted when it has stopped flowering and all the tails have fallen off. The new pot should not be much larger than the previous one. As a general rule it should only be one pot size larger. Use a well-drained peat mixture.

Propagation

Acalypha may be started from cuttings planted in a well-drained peat mixture. The Acalypha like to be slightly pot-bound.