

## **CHINESE EVERGREEN** **(*Aglaonema modestum/commutatum*)**

A Chinese evergreen will grow to about 3' tall, sending up a mound of foot-long leaves from its thick stems. The stems rise from underground rhizomes (modified stems) that serve as roots. The root system is shallow. This means that the Chinese evergreen can be potted in a pot that is wider than it is tall.

### **Light**

Basically Chinese evergreens thrive in low-light conditions. Their best source of light is provided indirectly through east or west windows, or directly through a north window. If the leaves should lose their dark green colouring, move the plant even further from strong light.

### **Temperature**

Normally warm-room temperatures are suitable. For extra humidity, stand the plants on trays of damp pebbles.

### **Water**

During the active growth period, water moderately, enough to make the entire mixture moist but, allowing the top inch of the mixture to dry out between waterings. During the rest period, water only enough to keep the mixture from drying out completely.

### **Fertilizer**

Use houseplant fertilizer monthly, except during the rest period (October to March).

### **Soil**

The soil should be coarse so that it drains well. Try 1 part sterilized soil, 1 part peat moss, and 1 part fine turface or perlite.

### **Repotting**

Move young plants into pots one size larger in the spring but, re-pot older plants only once every two to three years.

### **Propagation**

The best time to propagate is in the spring. This can be done by division or cuttings. Divide your aglaonema by carefully breaking apart the root mass. Sever the thick rhizomes with a clean, sharp, sterilized knife so that you get two or more clumps with several stems each. Dip the cut ends of the rhizomes in rooting hormone to stimulate new root growth. Cuttings, consisting of stem pieces with three or four leaves each, can easily be rooted in a mix of vermiculite and perlite. Root growth is speediest and

sturdiest when soil is maintained at a temperature of 70-75F or 21-25C. After three or four months the new plants will be ready for potting in individual pots.

Chinese evergreens are compact, rewarding plants that will thrive for years in modest light conditions.