

## DRACAENA

Marginata, Warneckii, Janet Craig, Cordyline

The tropics of the Old World, chiefly the continent of Africa and its outlying islands, have yielded many gardens treasures, but none more significant to indoor gardeners than the various species of dracaenas.

**LIGHT:** There are several reasons why dracaenas make good house plants. In the first place, they are tolerant of the low light of our homes, even though they will also tolerate sunshine. When natural daylight is lacking, they will thrive under artificial illumination. Because they are of tropical origin, they will find the normal short sleeve temperatures of our homes and offices ideal for their needs. They are also extremely durable in the dry atmosphere indoors, and will live for years under less ideal conditions.

**RE-POTTING:** Dracaenas should not be fertilized for six months after purchase; thereafter they should be given a mild house plant fertilizer at six-month intervals.

**CARE:** All plants grow best when their leaves are clean. As a cleaning agent for house plant foliage, use plain tepid water. A spray of water at a kitchen sink or even a shower in the bathroom will serve to wash off the dust and allow the leaf pores or stomata, to breathe freely again.

**WATERING:** This is probably the most important factor in healthy plant maintenance. When to water! The cheapest and best water meter is your finger. At a point one or two inches in from the rim of the pot, push your finger into the soil slightly. This surface must feel dry to the touch if it is to be watered. If the surface soil feels moist and cool to the touch, check again in a few days. Dracaenas should be allowed to dry moderately between watering in order to replenish the oxygen supply to the roots. Never allow the soil ball to become completely dry or devoid of any moisture. Generally speaking, a popular sized plant in a 10" diameter pot, in average indoor conditions, should require watering at 1 to 3 week intervals, probably, 10 days to 2 weeks. Smaller plants in hot rooms may need water weekly, while larger sizes in cooler locations may be happy with water possibly every third week.

**HOW TO WATER:** Use tepid water (that is, room temperature and as high as 80 degrees F.). Pour the water on the pot soil surface quickly so that the entire soil surface is flooded uniformly. It is very important to ensure that all of the ball is thoroughly wetted. 2 or 3 applications may be necessary to thoroughly wet the root ball.

**HOW MUCH WATER:** Always enough that about 20% of the total volume of water used leaches out of the drainage holes. This rinsing action is a very necessary tool in good soil maintenance. NEVER let the plant sit in this drained water. Poor watering (insufficient volume of water) is the main reason for browning of leaf tips.

The Dracaena is not difficult to care for and is ideally suited to our home environment.