

Aloe Care Handbook

Healing gel and easy pups

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AGreenNest Plant Guide

Aloe is the rare succulent that is both decorative and useful - the gel in those spiky leaves has soothed sunburn for thousands of years. This handbook walks through aloes of every size, from windowsill vera to architectural tree aloes.

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Aloe Vera - Aloe vera

Pups around the base are free plants -- separate in spring.

Care at a glance: light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour; water deeply every ~21 days (far less in winter); a sandy cactus mix; happiest around 55-85F; propagate by a pup separated from the mother or an offset pup pulled from the base; keep it away from cats and dogs.

Quick facts

- Light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour.
- Water: deeply every ~21 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 55-85F (13-29C).
- Humidity: dry air is fine.
- Soil: a sandy cactus mix.
- Propagate: a pup separated from the mother or an offset pup pulled from the base.
- Pet: keep away from cats and dogs.

The gel soothes minor burns; the latex just under the skin is a laxative, so don't eat the leaf.

Climbing Aloe - Aloe ciliaris

A vining aloe -- give it a small trellis or let it trail.

Care at a glance: light: bright indirect light, with a little gentle morning or evening sun; water deeply every ~16 days (far less in winter); a sandy cactus mix; happiest around 55-85F; propagate by a stem cutting left to callus then rooted or a pup separated from the mother; keep it away from cats and dogs.

Quick facts

- Light: bright indirect light, with a little gentle morning or evening sun.
- Water: deeply every ~16 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 55-85F (13-29C).

- Humidity: average home humidity is fine.
- Soil: a sandy cactus mix.
- Propagate: a stem cutting left to callus then rooted or a pup separated from the mother.
- Pet: keep away from cats and dogs.

Unlike most aloes it climbs, using tendril-like leaf tips.

Lace Aloe - *Aloe aristata*

Soft white spots and toothed edges; very cold-hardy for an aloe.

Care at a glance: light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour; water deeply every ~18 days (far less in winter); a sandy cactus mix; happiest around 50-80F; propagate by a pup separated from the mother or an offset pup pulled from the base; keep it away from cats and dogs.

Quick facts

- Light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour.
- Water: deeply every ~18 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 50-80F (10-27C).
- Humidity: dry air is fine.
- Soil: a sandy cactus mix.
- Propagate: a pup separated from the mother or an offset pup pulled from the base.
- Pet: keep away from cats and dogs.

It is sometimes called 'torch plant' for its orange winter flowers.

Soap Aloe - *Aloe maculata*

Spotted leaves; the sap lathers like soap when rubbed.

Care at a glance: light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour; water deeply every ~18 days (far less in winter); a sandy cactus mix; happiest around 50-82F; propagate by a pup separated from the mother or fresh seed sown on the surface; keep it away from cats and dogs.

Quick facts

- Light: lots of bright light and some direct sun for the best colour.
- Water: deeply every ~18 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 50-82F (10-28C).
- Humidity: dry air is fine.
- Soil: a sandy cactus mix.
- Propagate: a pup separated from the mother or fresh seed sown on the surface.
- Pet: keep away from cats and dogs.

Early settlers used the lather to wash -- hence 'soap aloe'.

General Care Principles

No matter the species in this handbook, a handful of principles carry most of the weight. Get these right and the individual notes above become fine-tuning.

Match the plant to the light: sun-lovers go in the brightest window or under a grow light; shade-lovers go in east or north light. Wrong light is the single most common cause of failure.

Water on the plant's schedule, not the calendar. Soak thoroughly, then let the soil dry before the next drink. In winter, ease right off - most of these plants want a cool, dry rest.

Use the right soil and a draining pot. Free-draining for succulents, moisture-retentive but aerated for ferns and foliage. A drainage hole is non-negotiable.

Propagate to multiply. Almost every plant here can be cloned from a leaf, offset, division, or cutting - see each species for its best method.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I really water?

Forget frequent sips. Soak the soil completely, then let it dry out fully before the next drink. In winter most of these plants want a long, dry rest. The lift test (light pot = dry) beats any calendar.

My plant is stretching and pale - what does that mean?

It wants more light. Move it to a brighter window or add a full-spectrum LED grow light. New growth will be compact and colourful; the stretched part will not undo itself, so behead and re-root the top if you like.

What soil should I use?

A free-draining mix is non-negotiable. For succulents that means gritty, sandy soil in a pot with a real drainage hole. For leafy types a peat-free houseplant mix is fine. Sitting in wet soil is the fastest route to rot.

Is this plant safe around my pets?

We note pet safety per species in this guide. 'Pet-safe' means it is not on the usual toxic lists, but no plant is food - keep curious cats and dogs from chewing leaves, and call a vet if you are worried.

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