

Calathea & Maranta Care Handbook

Prayer plants with moving leaves

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AGreenNest Plant Guide

Calathea and Maranta are the divas of the foliage world - stunning patterned leaves that fold up at night like praying hands, but fussy about water and humidity. This handbook demystifies their care so the leaves stay flat, green, and spectacular.

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Orbifold Calathea - Calathea orbifolia

Crisp, stabilised humidity (50%+) stops the edges browning.

Care at a glance: light: low to bright indirect light; keep it out of hot, direct sun; water deeply every ~12 days (far less in winter); a standard peat-free houseplant mix; happiest around 60-82F; propagate by splitting the clump at repotting; pet-safe.

Quick facts

- Light: low to bright indirect light; keep it out of hot, direct sun.
- Water: deeply every ~12 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 60-82F (16-28C).
- Humidity: it likes a humid spot or a pebble tray.
- Soil: a standard peat-free houseplant mix.
- Propagate: splitting the clump at repotting.
- Pet: generally safe around pets.

Its leaves are striped like a zebra and move with the light.

Peacock Plant - Calathea makoyana

The most fussy of the prayer plants -- needs steady warmth and moisture.

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The underside of each leaf is deep purple-maroon.

Prayer Plant - *Maranta leuconeura*

Leaves fold up at night like praying hands; keep humidity high.

Care at a glance: light: low to bright indirect light; keep it out of hot, direct sun; water deeply every ~12 days (far less in winter); a standard peat-free houseplant mix; happiest around 60-82F; propagate by splitting the clump at repotting; pet-safe.

Quick facts

- Light: low to bright indirect light; keep it out of hot, direct sun.
- Water: deeply every ~12 days, far less in winter.
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- Pet: generally safe around pets.

The nightly 'prayer' movement is called nyctinasty.

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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