

## ALOE VERA



Aloe vera, a member of the lily family, is a native of Africa. Its juices have been used to ease inflammations, burns and other skin injuries since the fourth century BC. Grown outdoors in warm climates where freezing does not occur, A. vera is rapidly becoming a common, indoor pot plant.

This stemless perennial will grow in the same pot for years without changing the soil if it is not over-watered. It does best in light shade, for too much hot sunlight scorches the spiny, strap-like leaves.

Use a commercial potting mix to which coarse, washed sand has been added (one part sand to two parts mix), or use a commercial mix labeled for cactus and/or succulents.

Water by soaking thoroughly. Allow the soil to dry down somewhat between waterings. Fertilize once a month from March through October with a liquid house plant food. Follow the manufacturer's diluting directions as given on the label. Water the plant twelve to twenty four hours before applying the diluted fertilizer if the potting mix is dry. There must be a protecting film of water around each root to prevent fertilizer burn.

The Aloe readily puts out offsets (suckers), small plants which develop at the base of the mother plant. To propagate the Aloe, carefully detach these suckers and insert them in pots of sandy soil mix. Treat them as if they were stem cuttings: keep evenly moist and in bright light but not in hot sun. Temporarily encase pot and all in a clear, plastic bag. Remove the bag when the roots are established. (A gentle tug of the plantlet will tell you whether or not roots have formed.) When this container is filled with roots, transplant to a pot no more than two sizes larger.

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