



Aloe

Aloe Vera is not a difficult plant to care for. It does grow faster outdoors during warmer months, but it doesn't mind a pot and does just fine in the house. Some basic things to watch out for: it's true that Aloe's like sun, but they can turn brown in harsh light. Indirect is best. Also, they can freeze during the winter and should be protected from frost. Move your Aloes indoors during cold months if you can.

Plant Highlights

- Use on sunburn.
- Attractive potted plant
- Many useful properties.

When you first get started with growing your own aloe vera, the most important things to consider are the soil and location of the plant. First, decide where you will be growing your aloe vera. Whether indoors or outdoors, it is imperative that you choose a place where your plant will receive plenty of light. This can be a little tricky, though, because too much direct sunlight can cause the plant to dry out and turn the leaves brown – but too little light will stunt the plant's growth. It is also important to note that aloe can freeze in the winter if outside, so keep your local climate in mind when choosing where you want to place your plant. I recommend choosing a pot you can easily bring indoors during freezes or leaving your plant in a location you can cover with a tarp or blanket. If the plant is to be grown indoors, make sure the plant will receive enough indirect sunlight; south or west-facing windows are ideal.

It's also important to choose an appropriate planter. Start with a medium to large planter and make sure it has good drainage. Planters with a single large hole in the bottom are best, as your plant will not grow if there is standing water. In fact, one of the most common issues new plant owners run into when trying to care for aloe vera is that they overwater the plant. When watering, the soil should feel damp but not soaked. The best way to gauge watering is to feel the plant leaves every few days, as long as they feel cool or moist, the plant has enough water. If the leaves feel dry or brittle, first examine the sunlight conditions, then adjust water as needed. Before you water again, the soil should be completely dry. During cooler months, it will need less water.

Once your plant reaches maturity, you can begin to harvest aloe for its nutritional benefits. It's safe to begin this process once additional leaves or shoots have grown from the center of the plant. To harvest leaves from your aloe, start by selecting mature leaves from the outermost section of the plant. Cut them from as close to the base as possible, but be mindful not to disturb the roots. Because it's a living decoration, I would suggest selecting plant leaves that will not reduce the plant's aesthetics.

The plantlets or "babies" your aloe produces can easily be removed by carefully uprooting them, detaching from the parent, and re-planting on their own. These mini plants make great gifts. It's not uncommon for aloe plants to repopulate exponentially, so there's a good chance that you will have plenty of aloe before you know it!

Light requirements: Full sun

Soil type: Well-drained pH 5.5-7.2.

Watering: Water when dry, let dry between waterings

Fertilization: Light fertilizing with 1/2 mix of water soluble fertilizer

Hardiness Zone: 9-11 (depending on variety). Best to keep inside during winter

