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COLLECTOR GUIDE

The Chinese Evergreen Guide

Aglaonema species

How to use this guide

The weight of the pot. The pace of a new leaf. The depth of the dry layer. The clarity of the variegation. Good care begins by noticing what changed before deciding what to do.

THE ONE-CHANGE RULE

Change one condition. Record what happened. Give the plant time to answer.

Contents

PLANT IDENTITY	
BOTANICAL	*Aglaonema* species
FAMILY	Araceae
ORIGIN	Tropical and subtropical Asia to New Guinea
HABIT	Clumping evergreen herb

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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Start with the condition you can observe. Avoid making several changes at once. The printable log at the end is part of the care system, not an afterthought.

Plant profile

Chinese Evergreens are tropical, herbaceous evergreens grown for broad lance-shaped foliage patterned in green, silver, gray, cream, pink, or red. They form clumps from short stems that can become cane-like with age. This guide uses a silver-centered cultivar as its visual reference; cultivar color and light needs vary.

Care at a glance

Low to moderate indirect light, steady warmth, free drainage, and measured moisture. Cultivar color helps determine how much light is useful.

LIGHT

Give it low to moderate indirect light. Variegated and colorful cultivars generally need more light than solid green forms.

WATER

Keep the mix moist, not wet. Let the top 1-2 inches dry between thorough waterings.

HUMIDITY

Average household humidity is tolerated, though moderate humidity is preferred. Keep foliage clear of drying drafts.

WARMTH

Aim for 68-80°F (20-27°C), keep it above 55°F (13°C), and protect it from chilling and abrupt temperature changes.

SOIL

Use a commercial soilless mix with added organic matter in a container with unobstructed drainage holes.

UPKEEP

Wipe dusty leaves gently. Inspect for mealybugs, aphids, scale, and mites.

THE RELIABLE DEFAULT

Choose low to moderate indirect light. Water only after the top 1-2 inches have dried, then drain completely.

Light

Window direction is only the beginning. Trees, buildings, season, curtains, and distance all change the light that reaches a leaf.

TOO INTENSE

Bleached or scorched patches on the window-facing surface after exposure to direct sun.

USEFUL RANGE

Low to moderate indirect light supports balanced growth; colorful cultivars need the brighter end of that range.

TOO DIM

Slower growth, longer bare stem, or fading pattern in a cultivar that normally holds strong color.

ADJUST SLOWLY

Move the plant in stages. Sudden changes can burn or stress established leaves.

> **TURN WITH INTENTION**
>
> The clump can lean toward a brighter side. Rotate only a small amount at a time, then leave it long enough to acclimate.

Placement

Choose low to moderate indirect light, adjusting for cultivar color. Keep the plant away from direct sun, cold glass, air-conditioning drafts, and heating vents.

Watering

Keep the mix moist without keeping it saturated. Use room-temperature water after the top 1-2 inches have dried.

After the upper mix dries, water gently and evenly, then let the pot drain and empty the saucer.

01

CHECK THE MIX

Feel into the top 1-2 inches and compare the pot's weight. If the upper mix is cool and damp, wait.

02

WATER EVENLY

When the upper layer is dry, use room-temperature water until it exits the drainage holes.

03

LET IT FINISH

Let the pot drain completely, then empty the saucer or decorative outer pot.

Humidity and temperature

Average household humidity is tolerated, but moderate humidity and protection from drafts help preserve broad leaves.

WARM ROOMS	Aim for 68-80°F (20-27°C), and keep the plant above 55°F (13°C). Protect it from cold glass, air-conditioning, and abrupt temperature swings.
HUMIDITY	Moderate humidity is useful. A room humidifier is more reliable than repeatedly wetting the foliage.
WINTER	Shorter days slow growth and water use. Check the mix rather than maintaining the same summer watering interval.

SEPARATE AIR FROM SOIL

Moderate humidity may help dry edges, but it does not justify saturated soil or stagnant air.

Soil and fertilizer

A modest gap below the rim makes watering easier; an open potting mix leaves pore space around the roots.

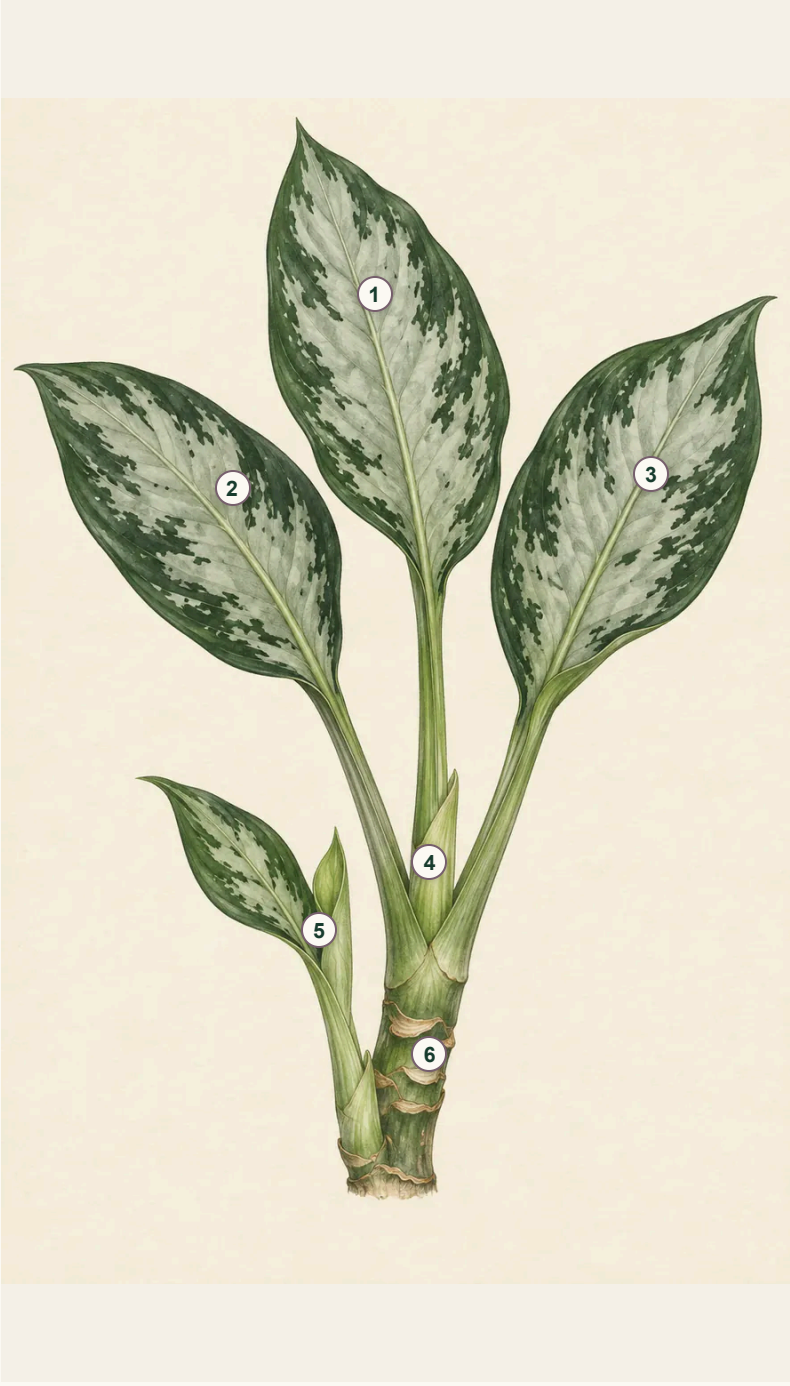
POTTING MIX

Choose a commercial soilless mix with added organic matter. It should hold moisture while retaining air space. Avoid dense garden soil, oversized pots, and sealed containers.

FERTILIZER

Feed lightly during active growth at or below the labeled rate. Excess fertilizer can burn leaf edges, so pause when growth slows and periodically flush accumulated salts.

Chinese Evergreen anatomy



Numbered markers correspond to the definitions at right.

1 LEAF BLADE

The broad, simple, lance-shaped photosynthetic surface.

2 VARIEGATION

Silver, gray, cream, pink, or red patterning that varies by cultivar.

3 VEINS

A central midrib with several main lateral veins supporting the blade.

4 SHEATHING PETIOLE

The channeled leaf stalk whose expanded base clasps the stem.

5 BASAL SHOOT

A new sucker emerging near the base and enlarging the clump.

6 CANE-LIKE STEM

The short stem that lengthens and shows leaf scars as the plant ages.

Leaf and stem care

READ THE WHOLE CLUMP

One marked leaf is weak evidence. Compare older leaves, the newest unfurling leaf, and each basal shoot.

CLEAN GENTLY

Support each blade as you wipe it with a barely damp soft cloth. Avoid oils, leaf polish, and hard rubbing.

PRUNE DELIBERATELY

Remove a fully failed leaf close to its stem. A bare, leggy top can be shortened and rooted with clean tools.

WATCH THE NEXT LEAF

Judge recovery by healthy new growth. Existing scorch, edge burn, and scars will not turn green again.

> **ABOUT FLOWERS**
>
> A mature plant may form a pale spadix inside a greenish spathe. Removing flowers and later fruit can redirect energy toward foliage; their absence indoors is normal.

Troubleshooting

Check the pattern, the root zone, and the recent change before reaching for a remedy.

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT TO INSPECT	FIRST RESPONSE
Brown tips or edges	Very dry air, a draft, watering swings, or excess fertilizer salts.	Stabilize moisture and air, then flush salts if fertilizer buildup is plausible.
Bleached or scorched patches	Direct sun, hot glass, or a sudden move into stronger light.	Move to indirect light and judge recovery by undamaged new leaves.
Yellowing with a soft base	Persistently wet mix, blocked drainage, root condition, odor, or chilling.	Pause watering and inspect drainage and roots before changing anything else.
Fading pattern or bare stem	Light level for that cultivar, age, one-sided exposure, or seasonal slowdown.	Improve indirect light gradually and evaluate only the next growth.
Speckling or pests	Leaf undersides, petiole bases, and stems for mealybugs, aphids, scale, or mites.	Separate the plant, confirm the pest, and follow a labeled treatment.

DO NOT STACK REMEDIES

Extra water, fertilizer, repotting, homemade pesticide, and a new location applied together can increase stress and erase the evidence. Change one condition at a time unless roots are actively failing.

Repotting

Healthy roots are firm and pale cream to tan; soft, dark, or foul-smelling tissue requires closer inspection.

01
PREPARE

Choose a draining pot one size larger and prepare fresh mix.

02
INSPECT

Look before teasing. Healthy roots are firm and pale or tan rather than soft, dark, and foul-smelling.

03
SET

Keep the crown and petiole bases at their former depth. Do not bury them to correct a lean.

04
SETTLE

Backfill gently, water to settle the mix, then let the pot drain completely.

WHEN TO ACT

Repot when roots are crowded, the clump becomes unstable, or the mix no longer drains normally. Choose a pot only slightly wider than the root mass.

Propagation

Division works when a basal shoot carries its own roots. Stem and tip cuttings are useful alternatives for cultivars that do not sucker freely.

A useful division preserves both foliage and roots instead of reducing the plant to bare pieces.

01
CHOOSE

Lift a healthy clump and identify a basal shoot that already carries a useful group of roots.

02
SEPARATE

Ease the root groups apart. Use a clean blade only where a firm shared stem makes separation necessary.

03
SET

Set each division at its former depth in a small draining pot of fresh, well-aerated medium.

04
MAINTAIN

Keep warm in low to moderate indirect light with even moisture, but ventilate and avoid soggy medium.

> **STEM AND TIP CUTTINGS**
>
> Cuttings with four to five leaves root best in a well-aerated medium. A bare lower stem can also be shortened by rooting the leafy top.

Seasonal care

Indoor seasons are shaped by daylight, heating, cooling, and windows. The plant's pace remains the primary signal.

OBSERVE	SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN	WINTER
LIGHT	Increase indirect light gradually.	Keep direct sun off the leaves.	Watch shorter days.	Use moderate indirect light.
WATER	Growth and drying may accelerate.	Recheck the upper mix often.	Intervals may widen.	Confirm dryness first.
FEED	Begin with growth.	Continue at label rate.	Reduce as growth slows.	Pause if inactive.
PROJECTS	Repot, divide, or take stem cuttings.	Inspect stems, leaf undersides, and drainage.	Clean leaves and review new growth.	Protect from cold glass.

THE USEFUL SCHEDULE

Schedule observations. Let the observations determine the care.

Pet safety

The ASPCA lists Chinese Evergreen as toxic to dogs and cats because it contains insoluble calcium oxalates.

PRACTICAL PRECAUTIONS

Place the plant where pets cannot chew the leaves or overturn its container.

Collect fallen leaves, pruned stems, fertilizer, and potting debris promptly.

Wash hands and clean tools after pruning, and keep plant sap away from eyes and mouth.

Keep fertilizers, pesticides, and potting materials secured.

WHAT TO DO

Possible signs include oral irritation, pain or swelling of the mouth, tongue, or lips, excessive drooling, vomiting, and difficulty swallowing. Contact a veterinarian or animal poison service promptly after suspected ingestion.

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL

(888) 426-4435

A consultation fee may apply.

This guidance applies to correctly identified *Aglaonema* species. Keep the botanical name available when seeking veterinary advice.

Observation log: before a change

Use one page for one care decision. Print extra copies of pages 18-19 whenever you need them.

PLANT NAME OR IDENTIFYING NOTE

DATE

LOCATION AND WINDOW DIRECTION

WHAT I OBSERVED

POTTING MIX BEFORE WATERING

☐ Wet ☐ Moist ☐ Dry at surface ☐ Dry deeper ☐ Not checked

ONE ACTION I TOOK

Observation log: follow-up

Return after enough time has passed to notice a meaningful response. Avoid adding a second change too quickly.

FOLLOW-UP DATE

DAYS SINCE THE CHANGE

WHAT CHANGED NEXT

WHAT STAYED THE SAME

MY NEXT OBSERVATION DATE AND WHY

☐ Continue ☐ Reassess ☐ Seek expert help ☐ No further action

Continue observing

Keep the guide. Reprint the log. Let observation become the routine.