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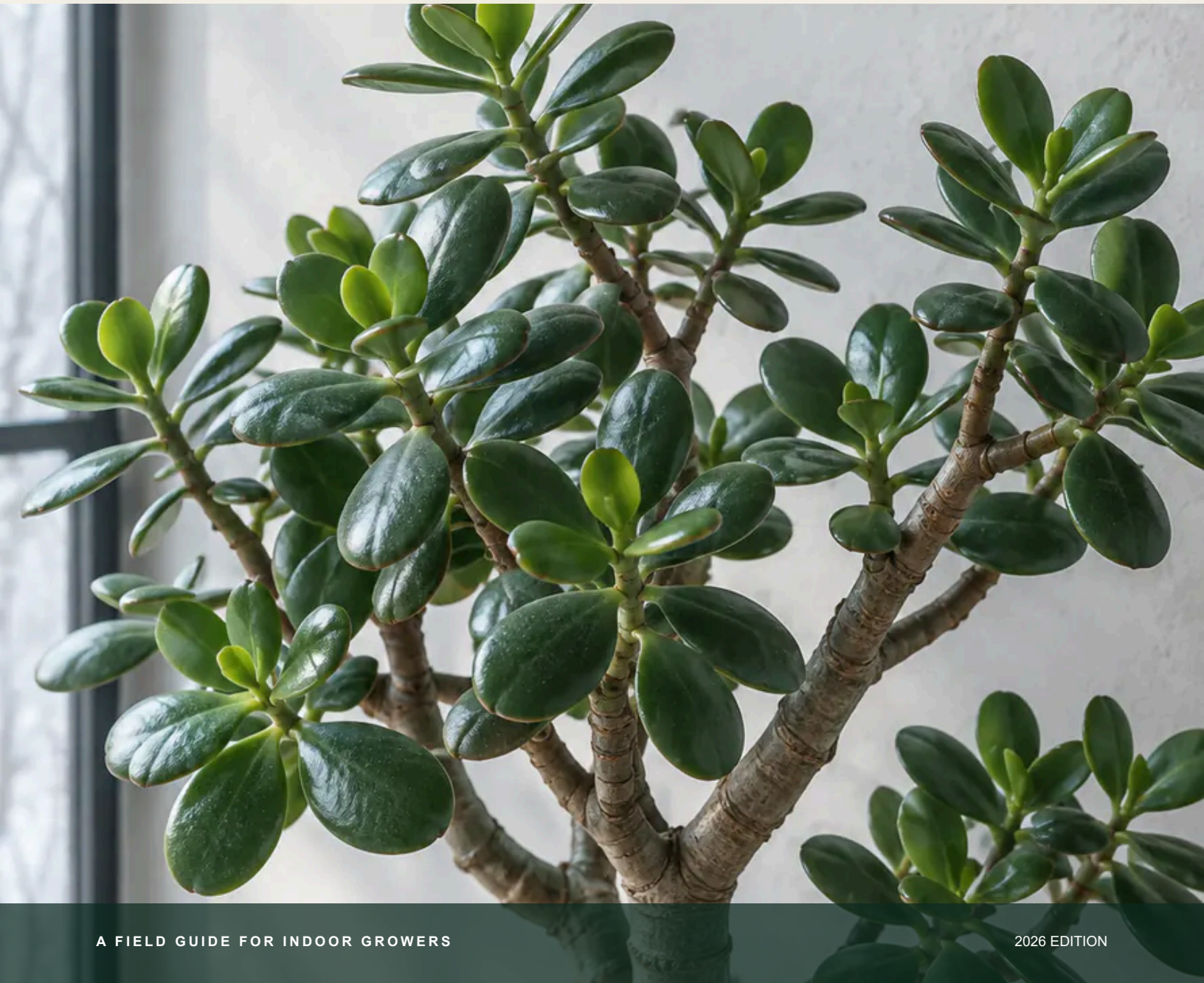
COLLECTOR GUIDE

The Jade Plant Guide

Crassula ovata



A FIELD GUIDE FOR INDOOR GROWERS

2026 EDITION

How to use this guide

The weight of the pot. The firmness of the leaves. The spacing between leaf pairs. The depth of the dry mix. 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	*Crassula ovata*
FAMILY	Crassulaceae
ORIGIN	South Africa
HABIT	Branched evergreen succulent shrub

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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

Crassula ovata develops thick, brittle branches that become gray-brown with age. Its glossy, water-storing leaves grow in opposite pairs and cluster toward the ends of the branches.

Care at a glance

Abundant light, rapid drainage, and a complete dry interval. Jade stores water in its leaves and stems, so a wet root zone is a greater risk than a short delay.

LIGHT

Give it abundant light near a bright window. Introduce stronger direct sun gradually so established leaves do not scorch.

WATER

Let the mix dry completely, then water thoroughly and drain completely. Never leave the pot standing in water.

HUMIDITY

Ordinary dry household air is suitable. Misting is unnecessary and should not replace a complete watering of the root zone.

WARMTH

Warm indoor conditions suit it. Protect the plant from freezing temperatures, cold glass, and abrupt temperature changes.

SOIL

Use a porous cactus or succulent mix amended with coarse mineral material in a pot with an unobstructed drainage hole.

UPKEEP

Turn the pot for balanced growth, prune above a node when shaping is needed, and inspect branch joints for mealybugs or scale.

THE RELIABLE DEFAULT

Let the mix dry completely. Then soak the full root zone, drain completely, and empty the saucer.

Light

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

TOO INTENSE

Bleached, tan, or russet patches after a sudden move into intense direct sun.

USEFUL RANGE

Several hours of bright window light support compact branches and closely spaced leaf pairs. Gentle direct sun can be useful after gradual acclimation.

TOO DIM

Long gaps between leaf pairs, weak leaning branches, pale growth, or a plant stretching toward the window.

ADJUST SLOWLY

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

> **ACCLIMATE BEFORE SUN**
>
> Jade needs abundant light indoors, but leaves grown in dim conditions can burn if moved directly into strong sun. Increase exposure in stages.

Placement

Choose a bright window and leave enough room for the canopy to develop. Rotate the pot occasionally for balanced growth, and acclimate it gradually before stronger direct sun.

Watering

The calendar should remind you to inspect the pot, not instruct you to pour.

After watering, let the pot drain in the sink and empty its saucer before returning the plant.

01

CHECK THE MIX

Check well below the surface and lift the pot. If the deeper mix is cool or the pot still feels heavy, wait.

02

WATER EVENLY

When the mix is dry through the root zone, wet it evenly until water exits the drainage hole.

03

LET IT FINISH

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

Humidity and temperature

Jade is adapted to dry air. Abundant light, free drainage, and protection from freezing matter more than added humidity.

WARM ROOMS	Normal warm indoor conditions are suitable. Keep leaves away from freezing glass and bring outdoor pots inside before frost.
HUMIDITY	Low to average household humidity is generally adequate. Misting does not correct dry roots and can leave water sitting between leaves.
WINTER	Shorter days slow growth and water use. Check the mix rather than maintaining the same summer watering interval.

SEPARATE AIR FROM SOIL

The leaves store water. Humidity does not justify keeping the root zone wet.

Soil and fertilizer

Granular mix is visible below the rim around the branching stem.

POTTING MIX

Choose a cactus or succulent mix amended with coarse sand, small pumice, granite grit, or perlite. Avoid dense garden soil and sealed containers.

FERTILIZER

Jade has modest nutrient needs. Use a light application of houseplant fertilizer during active spring or summer growth and follow the label.

Jade Plant anatomy

Numbered markers correspond to the definitions at right.

1 LEAF BLADE

A thick, glossy, oval blade that stores water in succulent tissue.

2 OPPOSITE LEAF PAIR

Two nearly stemless leaves attached across from one another.

3 NODE

The joint where a pair of leaves and new growth can develop.

4 YOUNG BRANCH

New green or reddish growth that thickens as it matures.

5 MATURE STEM

An older gray-brown branch with distinct rings from former leaves.

6 ROOTS

A modest branching system that should be firm rather than dark or soft.

Pruning and upkeep

CHOOSE A SOUND BRANCH

Work on firm, healthy growth. Do not prune a soft or discolored stem before checking the root zone.

CUT ABOVE A NODE

Use a clean sharp tool and leave a short section of stem above an opposite leaf pair.

EXPECT BRANCHING

Healthy buds below the cut may develop into new shoots. Growth speed depends on season and light.

KEEP LEAVES READABLE

Remove loose dust with a soft dry brush or a barely damp cloth. Skip leaf polish and abrasive wiping.

SHAPE GRADUALLY

Jade branches are thick but brittle. Remove a small amount at a time and support heavy limbs while moving the plant.

Troubleshooting

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

WHAT YOU SEE	WHAT TO INSPECT	FIRST RESPONSE
Wrinkled or thinning leaves	An extended dry period, intense heat, or damaged roots that cannot take up water.	Check the full root zone. Water thoroughly only if the mix is dry; inspect the roots if it remains wet.
Bleached or tan patches	Recent exposure to direct afternoon sun or a rapid move into stronger light.	Move back from direct sun and let the damaged areas remain as evidence while new growth develops.
Soft leaves or stems	Persistently wet mix, blocked drainage, cold damage, or root decline.	Stop watering. Inspect the stem bases, drainage, and roots before changing anything else.
Long gaps and weak growth	Insufficient light or one-sided light over an extended period.	Move gradually toward a brighter window and rotate the pot. Do not move directly into harsh sun.
Cottony clusters or scale	Branch joints, leaf undersides, and roots for white cottony material or fixed brown bumps.	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 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 main stem at its former depth and loosen only roots that release without force.

04
SETTLE

Backfill gently. If roots were cut, let wounds dry before the next watering.

WHEN TO ACT

Repot when roots are crowded, the plant has become unstable, or the mix no longer drains normally. Choose a pot only slightly wider than the root mass; excess mix stays wet longer.

Propagation

Jade can be propagated from a healthy stem cutting or a whole leaf. A stem section makes the sequence easier to see and preserves the parent plant's branching habit.

Choose a sound stem with compact growth, remove the lowest leaf pair, and let the cut surface dry before potting.

01
CHOOSE

Choose a healthy stem with firm leaves and compact spacing. Cut with a clean sharp tool.

02
PREPARE

Remove the lowest leaf pair without tearing the stem, leaving one or two bare nodes.

03
LET IT DRY

Allow the cut surface to air-dry before inserting the bare stem into propagation mix.

04
REPLANT

Use a small draining pot and water sparingly while roots form. Keep the cutting in bright light without harsh midday sun.

> **A WHOLE LEAF CAN WORK**
>
> A complete healthy leaf may also root after the break dries. Stem cuttings usually give a more substantial start and are the method shown here.

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 direct sun gradually.	Watch hot midday glass.	Watch shorter days.	Use the brightest safe place.
WATER	Growth and drying may accelerate.	Water only after complete drying.	Intervals may widen.	Confirm dryness first.
FEED	Begin with growth.	Continue at label rate.	Reduce as growth slows.	Pause if inactive.
PROJECTS	Repot, prune, or take stem cuttings.	Inspect branch joints and drainage.	Clean leaves and inspect pests.	Protect from cold glass.

THE USEFUL SCHEDULE

Schedule observations. Let the observations determine the care.

Pet safety

Crassula ovata is toxic to dogs and cats when ingested. The toxic principle is unknown, so prevention and prompt veterinary advice matter.

PRACTICAL PRECAUTIONS

Place the plant where pets cannot chew the fleshy leaves or fallen pieces.

Collect cut leaves, stem pieces, and repotting debris promptly.

Keep the scientific name with your plant records so a veterinarian can identify it accurately.

Keep fertilizers, pesticides, and potting materials secured.

WHAT TO DO

Reported signs include vomiting, depression or lethargy, and incoordination; diarrhea can also occur. Contact a veterinarian or animal poison-control service promptly after a suspected exposure.

ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL

(888) 426-4435

A consultation fee may apply.

Keep pruned leaves and stem cuttings out of reach as well as the mature plant. Do not induce vomiting unless a veterinary professional directs you to do so.

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

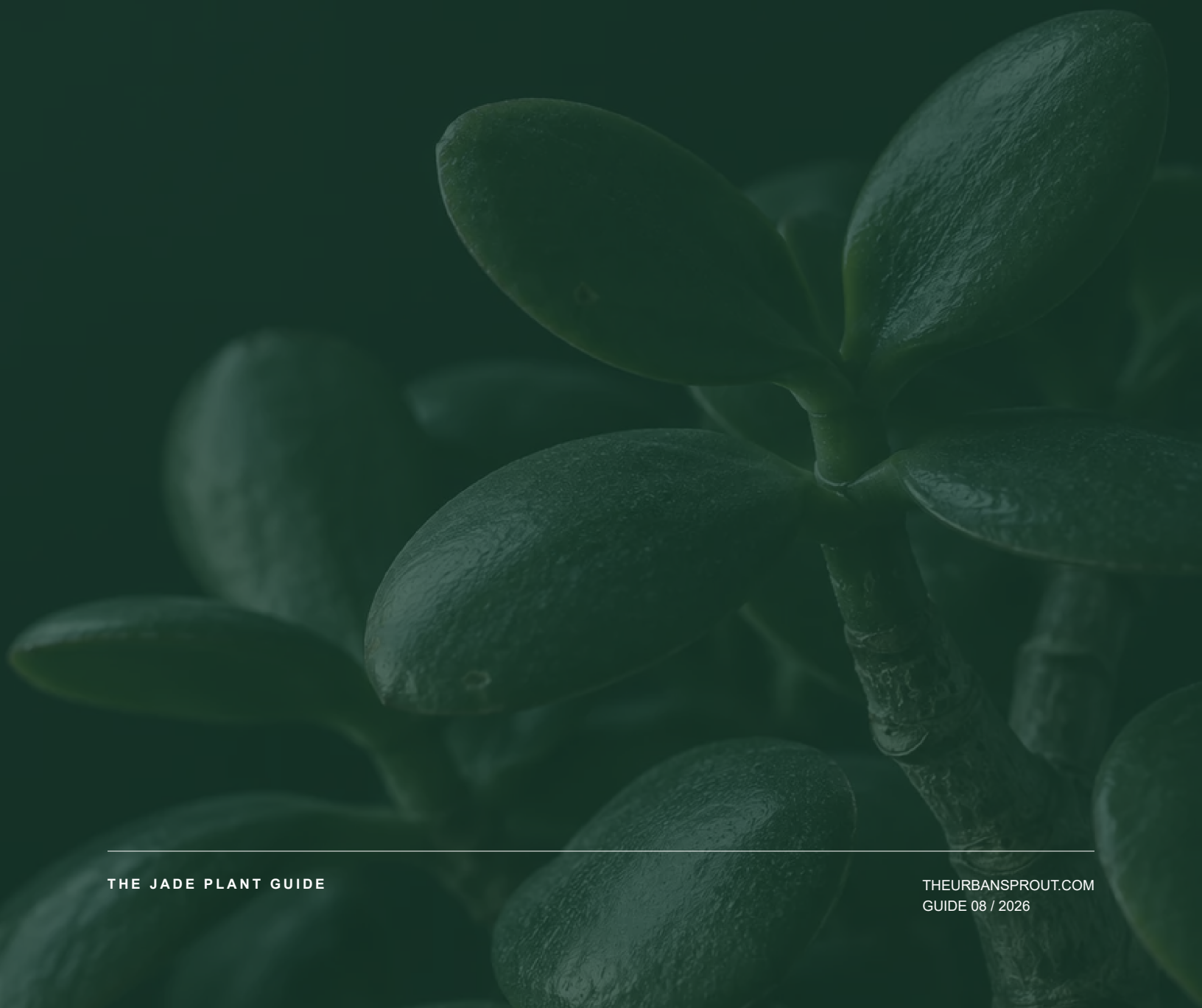
DAYS SINCE THE CHANGE

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.