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paddle plant



Photo courtesy of Nurserymen's Exchange, Inc.

Kalanchoe thyrsiflora—Paddle leaf, Paddle plant, Flapjacks, Dog tongue plant, Desert cabbage

BOTANICAL NAME

Kalanchoe thyrsiflora (syn. *K. luciae*)
(kal-an-KO-ee thur-sih-FLOR-uh)

COMMON NAMES

Paddle leaf, Paddle plant, Flapjacks, Dog tongue plant, Desert cabbage

DESCRIPTION

One of more than 150 species of perennial succulents in the *Kalanchoe* genus, *K. thyrsiflora* is noted for its foliage rather than its flowers. The fleshy, rounded green leaves can be tinged with red on the edges and will grow up to 6 inches in diameter. In the

plants' natural desert habitat, the leaves are covered in a white powder that helps reflect the sun and keep the plants cool. Paddle plants can grow up to 24 inches tall and may produce clusters of yellow, tubular flowers on tall inflorescence spikes in the spring.

DECORATIVE LIFE

Indoors, with proper care, the plants can last from months to years. The plants die after flowering but are easily propagated.

AVAILABILITY

Paddle plants are available year-round.

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Full or partial sunlight is needed; a sunny window sill is ideal. The more light the plants receive, the more pronounced the red leaf margins will be.

WATER Water the plants thoroughly when the soil starts to dry out. During the winter, the plants' dormant period, reduce watering to once or twice a month.

TEMPERATURE Indoors, average home temperatures of 65 F to 75 F are fine. Succulents do well with a marked difference between day and night temperatures. Outdoors, paddle plants are suited for Zones 9 or higher (see the hardiness zone map at www.superfloralretailing.com/november/hardiness.html).

HUMIDITY There is no need to mist the leaves, but give the plants fresh air during the summer.

FERTILIZER A half-strength fertilizer can be applied every other week in spring and summer, if desired.

PROPAGATION Stem or leaf cuttings will root easily. Let the cuttings dry for a few days, and then insert them into compost, and water sparingly to get started.

challenges

LEAF PROBLEMS Brown dry spots can result from underwatering, and overwatering can



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cause leaves to wilt and become discolored. Overwatering, particularly in winter, also can lead to rotting at the base of the plant. A sudden loss of leaves can be caused by underwatering or by watering with water that is too cold—tepid water should be used.

DRAINAGE Succulents naturally conserve water, a necessity in their native desert habitat, so good drainage is crucial. Choose pots with drainage holes, and plant in soil mixed with sand or grit to improve drainage. The plants' roots are short and fibrous, so use shallow containers. This avoids having unneeded soil below the plant that could hold moisture for too long.

fun facts

WHAT'S IN A NAME French botanist Michel Adanson first described the genus in the mid-1700s. The species name comes from the Greek word "thyrs," which in botany is described as a dense, paniclelike inflorescence, or arrangement of flowers. *K. thyrsifloras'* shape and stacked growth pattern inspire the plants' common names.

FAMILY Paddle plants are members of the *Crassulaceae* (orpine) family.

HOME SWEET HOME Paddle plants are native to South Africa.

SEEING RED Paddle plants' red leaf margins are most pronounced with full sun exposure. In more shaded settings, the leaves remain largely green. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
Hortus Third, A Concise Dictionary of Plants Cultivated in the United States and Canada, by Liberty Hyde Bailey and Ethel Zoe Bailey and the staff of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortatorium at Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
The Houseplant Encyclopedia, by Ingrid Jantra and Ursula Kruger
The House Plant Expert, by Dr. D.G. Hessayon
San Marcos Growers
www.smgrowers.com/info/kalanchoelucia.asp
South African National Biodiversity Institute
www.plantzafrika.com

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