

monstera

BOTANICAL NAME

Monstera spp. (mon-STER-a)

COMMON NAMES

Swiss-cheese plant, split-leaf philodendron, ceriman, Mexican bread-fruit, window leaf

DESCRIPTION

*Monstera*s are known for their glossy, oversized green leaves with the distinctive, deeply cut lobes at their edges or holes that resemble swiss cheese (thus the common name swiss-cheese plant). The most common indoor variety is *Monstera deliciosa*, which sometimes is sold mistakenly as *Philodendron pertusum*. Its leaves can reach lengths of a foot or more. Indoors, plants can grow 6 to 8 feet over about seven years. Strong support is needed to grow a tall plant.

DECORATIVE LIFE

With proper care, these plants can live indoors for years.

AVAILABILITY

*Monstera*s are available year-round.

in-store and consumer care

LIGHT Average indoor light is appropriate. Keep the plants out of direct sun. Small leaves and spindly stalks are a sign the plant isn't getting enough light, and it can stop growing altogether in too-dark conditions.

WATER In spring through fall, water thoroughly and allow the soil to dry slightly between waterings. Water less frequently in winter.

TEMPERATURE Average warm indoor temperatures are appropriate; avoid temperatures below 55 F. For active growth, temperatures above 65 F are required.

HUMIDITY In heated home environments, misting the leaves can be beneficial.

FERTILIZER Feed every two weeks with a balanced houseplant fertilizer in spring



M. DELICIOSA
SPLIT-LEAF PHILODENDRON

and summer. Cut back to monthly feedings in fall and winter.

PROPAGATION *Monstera*s can be propagated through stem cuttings (select a location just below an aerial root), or air layering will create new roots ready for potting.

challenges

PESTS AND PROBLEMS Watch for mealybugs, which can be removed with tweezers or a cotton swab dipped in alcohol, and spider mites, which can be sponged off with soapy water. Regular leaf cleaning and an adequately humid environment help prevent these problems.

LEAVES WITHOUT PERFORATIONS Young plants often have solid leaves with no "windows" or lobes. On older plants, leaves' failure to develop these perforations means more light and fertilizer are needed.

AERIAL ROOTS Most *Monstera*s are epiphytes, which grow on other plants and elevated supports, gathering water and nutrients through their root coverings. Aerial roots develop on *Monstera* stalks, and those close to the soil should be pushed into the compost; others should be trained around the support the plant is growing on.

BROWN-TIPPED LEAVES Underwatering or too-dry air are the likely causes.



MONSTERA ADANSONII 'JACQUINI'
SWISS-CHEESE PLANT

fun facts

FAMILY *Monstera*s are members of the Araceae (Arum) family. Relatives include *Philodendrons*, callas, *Anthuriums* and pothoses.

WHAT'S IN A NAME The genus name comes from the Latin "monstrum," which means "marvel" or "monster," possibly referring to the size and shape of the leaves. The species name "deliciosa" likely refers to the edible fruits these plants produce in the wild.

HOME SWEET HOME The plants are native to Mexico, Central and South America, and the West Indies.

THIS "CHEESE" ISN'T EDIBLE *Monstera*s contain a poisonous sap that if ingested can cause mouth and throat pain and shouldn't be allowed to come in contact with your eyes or other mucous membranes. Keep the plants out of reach of small children and pets, and wash your hands if you have come in contact with sap through injured leaves.

YELLOWED LEAVES Overwatering is the likely cause if many leaves are involved and if signs of wilting and rotting are present. If not, yellowed leaves may be a sign the plant needs more fertilizer. **sfr**

Some information provided by:
Botanica, by R.G. Turner Jr. and Ernie Wasson
The Chain of Life Network®, www.chainoflifenet.org
The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual,
by Barbara Pleasant
The House Plant Expert, by Dr. D.G. Hessayon
The Houseplant Encyclopedia, by Ingrid Jantra
and Ursula Krüger

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Reach "Foliage Plant of the Month" writer Amy Bauer at abauer@superfloralretailing.com or (800) 355-8086.

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