

Split Leaf Philodendron (*Monstera deliciosa*)



The Split Leaf Philodendron is a gorgeous foliage plant, not to be missed in any tropical garden. Leaves are huge, up to 90cm long and 75cm wide, and heart-shaped. Leaves are whole on young plants, but soon develop lobe shaped holes, hence the name 'Swiss Cheese Plant' and 'Window Leaf'. Aerial roots are produced, which are used to climb up a support (such as a tree, or totem pole), or will form a thick mat on the ground if unsupported. The Split Leaf Philodendron is stunning grown either way. It is native to Central American rainforests.

About fruit & flowers

Monstera deliciosa produces a spathe and spadix. The spadix is formed in the shape of a succulent spike with little flowers, and the spathe surrounds the spadix. Spadix can take over 12 months to mature, and swells into a fruit which tastes kind of like fruit salad, with hints of banana, mango and pineapple. Fruits are up to 30cm long and around 5cm in diameter.

People have reported this fruit to be delicious but care should be taken when harvesting & consuming this fruit, as all parts of this plant are poisonous, except for the ripe fruit. Fruit takes around 12 months to mature, and is spotted yellow-green. Creamy white pulp is found within. Split Leaf Philodendron can produce flowers from 2-4 years of age.

Growing the Split Leaf Philodendron

The Split Leaf Philodendron is best grown in warm positions, sheltered from frost and cold winds. Moist, well draining soil is preferred. This plant benefits from a regular application of fertiliser during the growing season. Choose a fertiliser suitable for tropical/foilage plants, or use a soluble fertiliser which can be applied over foliage & soil. Once established in the ground, these plants do not need much maintenance, but will benefit from some additional organic matter & mulching.

Split Leaf Philodendron is best grown in a shaded position with indirect light. Adequate water should be provided in tune with rainforest conditions, meaning a 'wet' and a 'dry' season. Water well in summer, less in winter.

Temperature is best above 18 degrees for this plant; however, some people have reported happy plants growing in temperatures as low as -2! Frost damage should be expected at this temperature, but there is a good chance this plant will recover. The Split Leaf Philodendron will need to be slowly adjusted to this conditions, but will grow happily almost anywhere.

If, after a year or so, you realize your Monstera is not producing large leaves with holes, try and expose this plant to some more indirect light. Without bright indirect light, Monstera will not do much, although it will most likely still look healthy. Feed well, provide nice fertile moist soil/potting mix & place in bright, indirect light – your Split Leaf Philodendron will love it.

Uses

The Split Leaf Philodendron is excellent for ornamental uses in tropical gardens, and as house plants Australia wide. These plants are often seen in buildings & offices as indoor plant. This plant handles dry air well which makes it very suited to indoor positions, as long as leaves are regularly wiped, and fertiliser is applied in the warmer months.

Provide a totem pole or moss totem for support. You can make your own, or purchase from a garden centre. You can make your own by wrapping sphagnum moss around a piece of wood and securing it with rope. Place it in the pot with the plant, taking care not to damage roots. The totem is best placed when you plant the plant. It is well suited to a position alongside a fence, or growing up dead trees and tree stumps.

For a beautiful tropical look, let the Split Leaf Philodendron climb palm trees, or train up pergolas, verandas or archways. This plant does not rob nutrient of its host, it just uses it for support.

Common names:

Ceriman, Swiss Cheese Plant, Fruit Salad Plant, Monster Fruit, Mexican Breadfruit, Split leaf Philodendron, Locust and Wild Honey, Windowleaf, Delicious Monster, Monstera.

Additional General Growing Notes:

ON ARRIVAL:

Soaking: When you receive your plants, unwrap them carefully, and give their roots a good soak in seaweed solution or water for a couple of hours. Some plants, mainly succulents and plants with fleshy roots such as *Dracaena draco*, should not be soaked for more than a few minutes to avoid rot. You can pour left-over seaweed solution on the plant after you have potted it up.

Pot size: Choose the right pot size for your plants. Don't choose a huge pot in the hope the plant will grow faster, as it won't! Most small plants will grow well in 75mm or 100mm pots, medium plants will often be suited to 125mm to 140mm pots, and large plants will need bigger pots to suit.



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Potting mix: Use a well draining potting mix which is of good quality. You can mix your own, or purchase a pre-mix from garden centres. Cacti, succulents and cycads will appreciate a potting mix which is very well draining. You can add some sand, perlite or vermiculite to improve drainage, or purchase a specific cacti & succulent potting mix. Some plants, such as Gardenia & Azalea will need specific potting mix as they prefer acidic soil, and Aroids such as Orchids and Philodendron like to grow in special orchid mix.

Fertilising: All plants appreciate good, nutrient-rich soil, and will grow well with a regular application of the right fertiliser. It is best to find a fertiliser specifically designed for the type of plant you are growing. We generally use a slow release fertiliser (such as Osmocote) for most plants, and also add lots of organic matter to the soil. Plants thrive with regular application of blood & bone, Dynamic Lifter or other organic fertiliser, which adds to your soil. You can also add slow release regularly to really kick them on. Some foliage plants will love a regular feed with liquid fertiliser, as it is both absorbed through the foliage, and the soil. Cacti and succulents need special care when it comes to fertilisers as they can be very sensitive. Use a diluted form of liquid fertiliser or organic fertiliser only.

Watering: Make sure you water in your plants really, really well! You need to get air bubbles out of the soil, as roots die when they come into contact with air bubbles. This might cause them to die back, prohibits them from thriving and might even cause death. It is one of the most important things to do when re-potting plants! Once watered in, water your plants regularly. The rate would depend on the pot size. Most leafy plants will give you an indication of when they need watering, but it's best to not let it get that far. You can stick your finger in the soil to check, the soil should feel moist to your second knuckle. If it feels dry, water. It is best to water when the plant needs it, and water well, rather than watering small amounts. This will stop the roots from developing properly. Make sure you don't overwater to avoid root rot and cloggy soil. Cacti and succulents don't need as much water. Most plants need less water during winter. Pots will need more watering than plants in the ground.

Position: It's best to keep your plants in a protected position away from heat, sun, draughts etc. until you see some new growth, such as a new shoot or leaf. Once they have accustomed to their new climate and environment, you can start adjusting them to their final position in the garden, or pot. Slowly adjust them to full sun, and keep them protected from frost and wind for as long as possible. Some plants, such as *Dracaena draco*, Cycads, Cacti and most Succulents can be placed in a sunny position right from when they are young. Growing plants up in pots until they're nice and strong will ensure a good start in the garden, so we recommend growing them in pots for a while first. If you are planting them out, 'tree guard' are a good thing, and so are structures around the plant with shade cloth. Make sure you mulch well when you plant them in the garden – mulch conditions your soil, protects roots and saves water!

Research

As there are many aspects to growing plants, such as climate, position and care, we recommend you read as much as possible about your plant. The internet is a great source of information, as our online forums and books. Some plants may have special needs in your climate, and our guide is only provided as general information and reflects our own experience. We do not accept any responsibility for consequences of the usage of the information provided in this guide.

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