

GARDENING

The two main keys to successfully growing jade plants is watering and light

Here's how to care for your jade plant

BY JACQUILINE NAKANDI

The jade is largely considered an indoor plant, but can be put on the patio during hot seasons. It has fleshy, oval leaves that grow from its thick stalk. However, it does not transplant well, explains Maureen Nassozi, a gardener.

"It is rare to see the Jade plant bloom," she adds.

Nassozi says if planted indoors, it grows fast to a height of five feet. If, however, it is not given attention or groomed, it can become heavy at the top, causing it to tip over.

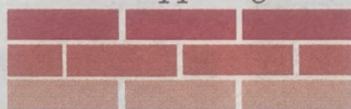
Sarah Murungi, a florist, says if your jade grows heavy at the top, slip the pot in which the plant is, into a larger pot and fill the space in between the two pots with fresh soil.

She adds that the jade plant requires at least four hours of direct sunlight to blossom, although there are some varieties which prefer less light and can be grown in bright but indirect light.

"This plant has a faint perfume-like sap," Murungi adds.

She advises that the leaves should be occasionally cleaned with a wet cloth to remove dust. If they become

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Propagation

Frank Lule, a gardening expert, says the jade plant can be propagated by cutting. A disease-free branch which is about three inches long, is best for propagation.

Cut the branch and let it dry in a warm place for about two weeks,



The plant can be propagated using either leaves or stems

until it develops callous to prevent the cutting from getting diseases.

"Dust the open wound of the cutting with a rooting hormone, which contains an anti-fungal compound to prevent it from getting diseases," Lule says.

Once the cutting is dried, place it

in a potting mixture made of half perlite and half soil. Water it carefully until the mixture becomes soggy. The cutting should take root.

Nassozi also explains that the jade plant can be propagated by leaves. Select a healthy leaf by cutting it from the jade flower. Lay the cut leaf on

a potting mixture of half perlite and half soil, water the mixture once after laying the leaf.

This should be done until the leaf puts out roots.

"It takes between two weeks and two months for the plantlets to appear," Nassozi says.

Fertilisation and watering

Murungi says the plant should be in soil that always has moisture. Pour the water into the base of the pot, but do not let the water stay for hours.

After a while, pour out the rest of the water once the soil is all damp. If the soil gets too soggy, the roots will begin to rot.

Murungi explains that a newly planted jade, should be fertilised after three months and once it is rooted, fertilise it every three to four months.

Controlling pests

The jade plant is usually attacked by mealy bugs and red spiders. Nassozi says the flower should be kept fresh by removing the old leaves from the plant and those on the soil as they harbour pests.

In case the plant has been attacked, use the insecticides malathion and pyrethrin to treat the plant.