

## Jade Plants in the Home

*Published 12/21/20- image of jade plant taken by the author.*

One of the first plants my mother planted at their new home in 1972 was a jade plant, likely a cutting stolen from a shopping center parking lot. She did that a lot. This was coastal California so the jade became part of the landscape. In 2014 the jade was trimmed and the plant's stem diameter was over 4". Several small pieces were brought back, one of which is now 2' tall.



Jade, *Crassula ovata*, are succulents native to the south eastern coastal region of Africa but are common as houseplants worldwide. Their popularity is due to their low-maintenance needs, symmetrical growth habit, easy propagation, prefer conditions in most homes, and generally a sturdy plant that withstands and can recover from some abuse. They are also a popular bonsai plant, good to learn on, and form a nice shape if pruned correctly.

Most familiar is the standard dark green, flat leaved plant but there are other varieties some with variegation's of yellows, pale greens, and cream, some show red leaf tips, and some even have tubular leaves. All varieties are fairly good at getting big and top heavy so wide, sturdy pots are best to prevent a top heavy plant from tipping over. Repot smaller jade every 2-3 years, older jade 4-5 years. Repot in the spring, wait a couple of days before watering, wait at least 1 month before fertilizing.

Jade can be started from stem cuttings or a single leaf. Next to our 2' tall plant is a 2" pot holding a single leaf with a bunch of tiny stems erupting around it. Cut stems work best with at least 2 sets of leaves removed. Let the cuts callous over for at least a day then poke them into moist soil. With leaves simply bury the stem end of the leaf into the soil. Provide no to little watering and in 2 weeks the new plants should start rooting in. Once rooted they can be thoroughly but gently watered.

Jade need well draining soil; potting soil mixed 2:1 with perlite or sand, or a commercial cactus mix will be fine. They need a minimum of 4 hours of direct sunlight, so this is a good west or south window plant. Normal household temperatures are fine but if it gets warmer all they need is adequate water.

Don't water jade on a schedule, water more in the spring and summer during their most active growth period. Water deeply and let the soil mostly dry out between watering. In the fall and winter growth slows so reduce watering at that time. Some really big jade may only need 2 or so waterings during the fall and winter. Leaf loss or spotting probably means not enough water. Squishy leaves means too much water. Jade are sensitive to salts in tap water. The overall appearance of our 2' jade really improved when tap water was replaced with reverse osmosis water. Fertilize with a general balanced or succulent fertilizer at the beginning and end of the growing season. Dry roots can be damaged by fertilizers so water first then follow with fertilized water.

Another good thing about jade is it usually takes a while for one to die, giving plenty of time to figure out what's wrong.

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