

Mini Jade – Portulacaria Afra

Origin

The native home of *Portulacaria afra* extends from the Eastern Cape northwards into KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and the Limpopo provinces of [South Africa](#), as well as [Eswatini](#), and further north into [Mozambique](#). It grows in warm situations on rocky outcrops and slopes.

Etymology

The specific epithet "[afra](#) (AF-ruh)" means "from Africa" and refers to the origin of this species. The common name "Elephant Bush" refers to the fact that elephants are known to enjoy eating the leaves of this plant.

Placement

The Jade is considered an indoor tree in most temperate zones, although it can be grown outdoors in full sun and high temperatures. Do not let temperatures drop below 40 °F (5 °C). It requires substantial light, full sun if possible, especially when kept indoors. You'll know if your Jade tree is getting enough sunlight when it's leaves develop red tips or edges.

Watering

Jade trees can hold large amounts of water inside their leaves, so water sparsely and allow the plant to dry out a little between watering. If the tree is kept relatively cold during winter months, watering can be done as seldom as once every three weeks. Monitor your tree closely and water the moment the soil dries out. The Jade Bonsai is not as particular about over-watering as most other succulents. So in most houses once a week is good. Fill the pot up with water, let it drain and repeat a couple times to saturate the root ball. If you can use the kitchen sink sprayer and gentle spray the soil keeping the sprayer moving. Also washing the leaves off with the sprayer will prevent bugs from setting in.

Fertilizing

Fertilize your Jade tree once a month, spring through autumn, during the growth season. Any normal fertilizer should be fine, try to use organic and follow the instructions on the bottle for mixing the right amount.

Pruning

Because the Jade tree is a succulent, it retains water in its trunk and branches. The water retention makes the tree limbs heavy which naturally bends the trunk and branches. It responds very well to pruning, and you should prune it regularly to force it to grow branches, especially in the lower part of the trunk, usually every two months when you see new growth. Remember the light green turns to darker green and then is able to be pruned.

Repotting

Repotting a Jade tree should be done every-other-year in spring. Be sure to use a well-draining soil mixture and don't water the soil for about a week after repotting. This allows the cut or damaged roots to dry and callous.

Propagation

Jade trees are particularly easy to propagate using cuttings. This should be done during the summer months. Take the cuttings from today and let them dry out for a day, then put them in some dirt or sand, water once and then let them go for two weeks before watering again.