

## Aloe plants including Aloe vera



Aloes are sculptural plants that usually form compact, spiralling rosettes of leaves. They are easily grown in containers and are great as houseplants and for placing outdoors during the summer. Aloe vera has the added benefit that the sap can be used to soothe mild sunburn.

### How to look after aloes

**Where to grow them:** They enjoy full sun and dry conditions, such as a sunny window sill and can tolerate being near a radiator.

**Compost:** Most are from dry sandy areas where the soil drains freely. Use multipurpose peat-free compost mixed with 50% sand and/or grit to help give them the same conditions.

**Water sparingly** – only water when the compost feels dry and hardly at all in winter.

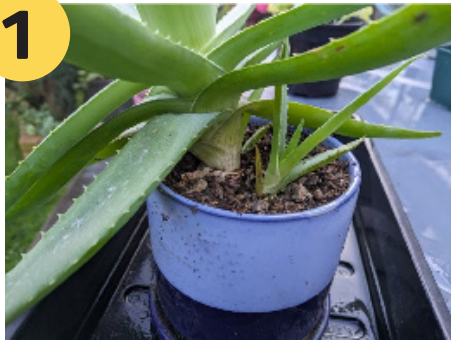
**What they don't like!** Aloes will not grow well in continuously wet compost or in shade. They dislike humid atmospheres and cannot cope with freezing temperatures.

**Feeding:** To encourage good growth and flowering, feed once a month during the growing season (April–September), using a liquid feed. Don't feed in the winter.

**Plant fact:** Sap is extracted from the leaves of Aloe vera for use in the manufacture of cosmetics, medicines and drinks.

## Producing more plants (propagating)

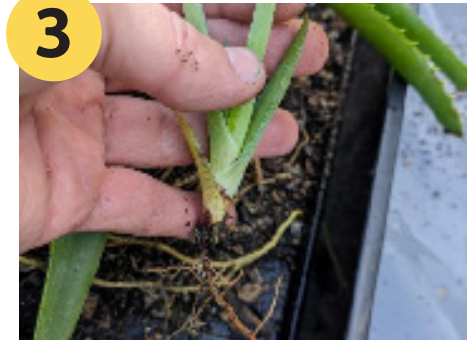
Once you have a good healthy aloe plant, it's very easy to propagate many plants from it. When mature, they produce lots of offsets (or small plants) that can be separated and grown on their own. The following instructions show you how:



**1** Wait until you see an offset growing next to the parent plant as shown in this picture.



**2** Gently lift the plant out of the pot over a tray to catch loose soil and gravel.



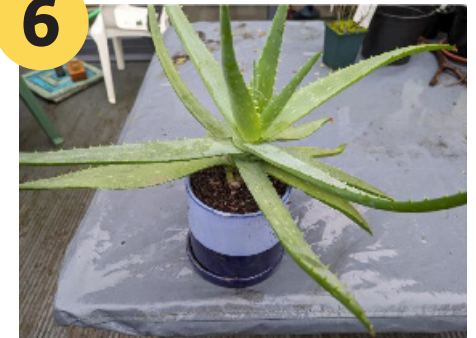
**3** Carefully separate the small offset plant from the parent, if possible with some roots attached. Set the small plant aside while you prepare peat-free compost and a pot.



**4** Mix together 50% grit or gravel and 50% multipurpose, peat-free compost.



**5** Put the new offset you separated earlier in a suitably sized pot and fill with the compost and grit/gravel mix. Water it to settle the compost around the roots and position in a light, sunny place indoors.



**6** Trim the ends of the roots on the parent plant with secateurs or sharp scissors and put it back in its pot with fresh peat-free compost.

## Peace lily (*Spathiphyllum wallisii*)



This popular houseplant is easy to look after and has lovely cream sail-like flowers which stand out against glossy deep green leaves.

Although beautiful to look at, peace lilies are harmful if eaten, and can irritate the skin and eyes, so care should be taken and gloves worn when handling them.

### How to look after peace lilies

**Where to grow them:** They like a bright spot in partial shade, so avoid sunny window sills. They also prefer a humid environment so may suffer in very dry areas such as near a radiator.

**Compost:** Any peat-free multipurpose compost will do.

**Water regularly** – keep the compost moist but not wet.

**Flowers:** They will flower from spring to summer. They get their name from the large white flowers that are thought to look like white flags (a symbol of peace). Each flower can last up to 4 weeks.

**Feeding:** A balanced liquid fertiliser like Baby Bio according to the instructions on the packet, every month.

**Pots:** Transfer to a bigger container if it overfills its pot.

### Producing more plants (propagating)

Peace lilies can be propagated by **division** in winter or immediately after flowering. The following resource on how to divide herbs illustrates the technique of division well:

**Campaign for School Gardening: How to divide potted herbs**

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/Resources/Sequence-Card/How-to-divide-potted-herbs>



# Pelargoniums



Pelargoniums (often called ‘tender geraniums’) are bright, cheerful summer-flowering plants. Their leaves often have an amazing scent when rubbed. In addition, they are drought tolerant and easy to propagate (producing more plants from cuttings). A great indoor plant for people of all ages to enjoy.

## How to look after pelargoniums

**Where to grow them:** Somewhere frost-free that gets the sun, for example a sunny windowsill.

**Compost:** Any peat-free multipurpose compost will do. In the wild they grow in well-drained sandy soil, so mixing some grit or sand into the compost will help.

**Water sparingly** – let the compost almost dry out between watering.

**Flowers:** They will flower between June and September. Removing the flowers as they fade will prolong their flowering.

**Feeding:** Use a balanced liquid fertiliser like Baby Bio according to the instructions on the packet, every 14 days in spring and summer. Reduce feeding to once a month in autumn and even less in winter.

## Producing more plants (propagating)

Pelargoniums can also be propagated by taking **softwood cuttings** from spring to autumn. Propagating by cuttings makes plants which are identical to the parent plant.

**Good plants to take softwood cuttings from include:** box, salvia, euonymus, hebe, pelargonium, fuchsia, mint

# Softwood cuttings

## You will need:

- Clean pots or module trays
- A healthy plant
- Peat-free compost
- Something flat like a ruler
- A knife or secateurs



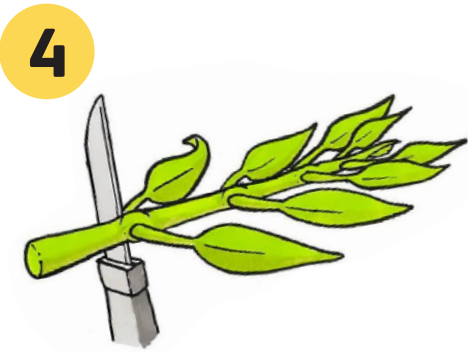
Fluff up the compost, overfill the container and tap on the surface twice.



Level off the surface of the compost with something flat. Zig zag from the middle outwards in both directions.



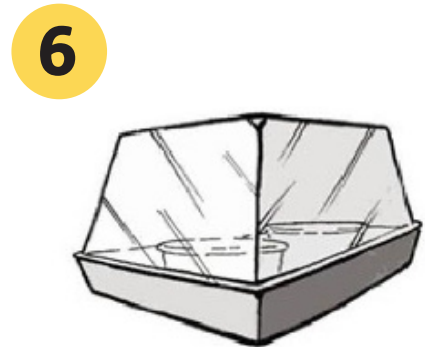
Cleanly cut healthy, non-flowering stems from the plant.



Trim the cuttings to about 6-8cm long under a node at the base. Cleanly remove excess leaves from the base.



Push the cuttings into the compost so around one third of the cutting is below the surface.



Water with a fine rose and place in a propagator or plastic bag. Remove the cover for 10 minutes every day.

## Next steps

- After a few weeks give the cuttings a tug. If there is resistance they are starting to root
- When roots start to come out of the bottom of the pot, separate the cuttings and pot up each one in a larger pot
- Plant them out into the garden when they are big enough