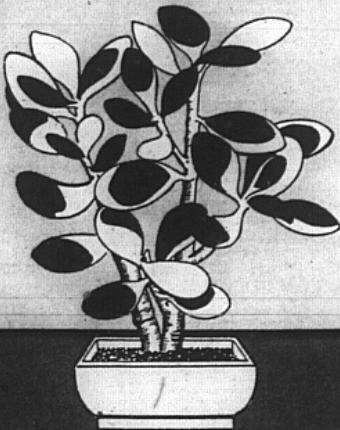


# Home/Garden



Crassula-argentea or the jade tree.

## Growing cactus and succulents

Some plants have a such a strong sculptural shape that they make a striking decorative accent in your room. Many of these plants are succulents or cactus, a family that can tolerate wide ranges of temperature and require very little care.

The jade tree, *Crassula argentea*, is commonly grown; you need only go to your supermarket to find a dozen specimens all potted up and ready for you to buy and take home. My jade tree is now about one-and-a-half feet tall and is thriving in an east window. It has survived neglect, roughhousing by the cat and pecking by the chickens when it's vacationed outdoors.

Jade trees can grow to a height of three feet indoors; any larger would be quite unusual. They can even bloom, producing tiny white blossoms at the tips of the thick fleshy leaves, but this is also unusual.

Like all succulents, jade trees need a soil that drains well and it should be allowed to dry between waterings. It will need more water during the spring and summer when it's actively growing. You'll be able to tell if you've been too stingy because the leaves will start to shrivel. If you notice that the leaves are no longer plump and smooth a generous watering or two should correct the problem with no lasting damage being done.

The jade tree is a long-lived houseplant and you will need to repot it from time to time. I use a clay pot because it is heavy and because it allows the soil to dry more quickly. One of the major dangers to the jade tree is setting it too deeply in the soil when you repot. Make sure that the level of soil remains the same in the new pot; do not add extra soil around the trunk or it will rot and your plant will die.

### Agaves

Agaves are a large family of plants that range in size from just a few inches to several feet. They are often called by the name century plant because they bloom so seldom indoors that it might as well be once a century. After they bloom in the wild they begin to die. Even without flowers, these are handsome plants.

*Agave victoriae-reginae* has a tight rosette of blue-green leaves edged with white and will only grow about 10 inches tall. *Agave leopoldii* reaches the same size but the succulent leaves are thinner and a lighter shade of green. It's notable for the threadlike fibers it produces. The leaf tips of both these plants are sharp!

An agave will grow slowly and you can allow it to get potbound. Give it full sun and water it only when it

# About those vegetable names...

By KEN and PAT KRAFT  
The Christian Science Monitor

EUREKA, Calif. — It must have seemed like a good idea back in the 19th century.

Here was this new pole snap bean that grew clusters of big, dark green, fleshy pods up to six inches long, so that a housewife could pick a painful for dinner in no time from her kitchen garden.

The seedsman who introduced the bean was delighted to call it Lazy Wife's Pole Bean. And he got away with it. The new bean sold like crazy.

In today's equal-rights climate, no seedsman in his right mind would dream of using so belittling a name.

Another dubious-sounding name was given to an otherwise nice, solid

butterhead lettuce. It was offered as Blonde Blockhead, a name guaranteed to raise the hackles of almost any fair-haired woman gardener today.

Thickhead Yellow was another lettuce name almost as bad.

The descriptive name has always been popular with seed and plant sellers. Today, onions named Sweet Sandwich and Giant Hamburger proclaim their final destination to all.

A cucumber on the market years ago owed its popularity not to its quality, which was so-so, but to its shape. It was slender, curly, and several feet long, and looked quite a bit like its name—Serpent, or Snake.

It provided innocent merriment among the boys by frightening the girls.

Sometimes a name is chosen not because it describes the plant or its fruits or flowers, but just because it sounds important.

A strain of pansies was once called Defiance for this reason. "Giant" is always a popular name, as are "Jewel" and "Royal."

"Eureka," for "I have found it!" also apparently rings a bell with buyers.

Some names are chosen for their associations.

An old pea, the Telephone, had vines tall enough to suggest they might need a telephone pole to climb.

And the telephone was still a new enough invention at that time that naming a plant for it indicated the plant was also new.

The same reasoning applied to a wax bean that appeared in 1900 with the name Twentieth Century.

Banquet was the luscious name of an old cantaloupe, but another one with skin tough enough for shipping received the dismal name of Iron-clad. A watermelon, though, bore the rather humorous name Hungarian Honey.

Least anyone think the name of a plant isn't all that important, be aware that changing names can make the difference between a fizzle and a success.

Some years ago a seed house brought out a melon under the name Hoodoo, and it turned off customers by the droves. When Hoodoo came out the next year as Hearts of Gold, the gardeners loved it.

Who thinks up these names, anyway?

Well, in the seed business, it has long been the practice to let the breeder of a new variety name his baby. This courtesy is still observed to some extent.

Dr. Calvin Lamborn, who bred the sensational first new snap pea and won a rare gold medal for it from All-America Selections, named his next three varieties for members of his family, SugarRae, SugarMel, and SugarBon.

A frequent way of getting a name for a new plant bred by a seed house or nursery is the group-think approach. Here, members of the staff get together and start thinking out loud.

"There are no holds barred, and nothing is taboo, regardless of how far out it may seem," says William J. Park, head of Geo. W. Park Seed Company.

Also using this method, Jeannette Lowe, while a plant breeder with the W. Atlee Burpee seed house, casually remarked of a new phlox variety, "See how it twinkles," causing her boss, the late David Burpee, to seize upon "Twinkles" as the name.

Another time, Miss Lowe came up with the name for a new flower via a kind of mistaken identity. She had been gazing at a new unnamed snapdragon and murmured, "Notice that highlight?"

Her employer was entranced. "That's the name!" he cried. "High Life!"

So prized by seedsman and nurserymen are ideas for new names that one of them confided to a friend that he had accumulated a file of a thousand.

When asked how he had managed to amass so stunning a total, he said that he never missed a chance to pick up a possibility.

Driving his car, he always looks at billboards, for instance, and picks up good names from some of them.

At dinner parties he sometimes gets name possibilities from things said during conversation. He's often known for whipping out paper and pencil in theaters, when a likely-sounding word occurs during the play or movie.

Plants are often named for people. This can have drawbacks, however. Naming a plant after a friend might not endear a seedsman to that friend if he should write the introduction in his catalog something like:

"John Smith is an unusually long string bean," or, say, of a petunia, "Mary Jones has good color and sturdy stems."

Gill  
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863-9565



Recorder/Chuck Blake

Keep feeders filled if you have begun to feed the birds. Some birds may come to depend on the seed you provide in the cold winter months, so if you start feeding don't stop until spring.

## Garden Calendar

This information is provided by Karen Idoine of the University of Massachusetts Cooperative Extension Service.

- Now is the time to:
- give a "gardening certificate" that sets a spring planting date when you'll help a friend seed or plant something special.
  - look for lily-of-the-valley pips which have been prepared for forcing. Bulb dealers will usually have them throughout the year. Plant in moist potting soil and keep in a dark location at 70 to 75 degrees for about 10 days, then move gradually into the light.
  - start some sprouts for your winter salads. Be sure to rinse them several times a day to keep fresh.
  - inspire a novice gardener with the 1989 Garden Calendar. This year's theme is pruning. Calendars

may be purchased at Franklin County Cooperative Extension, 238 Main St., Greenfield.

- germinate orange seeds for unusual houseplants.
- spread wood ashes evenly and lightly on your garden or lawn; clumps or piles of ashes can kill plants. Alternately, incorporate them in your compost pile or store them for use in the spring. Have your soil tested for pH level in the spring so you will know how much wood ash to apply to your garden or lawn.
- check potted hardy, forcing bulbs for root growth.
- provide atmospheric moisture for plants in dry homes by misting frequently or placing plants on trays with pebbles, moistened regularly.
- bring holiday plants as host/hostess gifts.
- avoid shortcuts across your lawn this winter.

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