

Mother of Thousands - Cactus Succulent

Scientific Name: Bryophyllum daigremontianum Synonym: Kalanchoe daigremontiana

Family: Crassulaceae

Other Common Names: Alligator Plant, Chandelier plant

Hardiness: 9b - 11

These plants are nice outdoor and indoor plants as well. When mature, they will have a nice cluster of bell shaped blooms that are pink to coral color, generally blooming in the fall or spring. These plants will reach 5' in height given the right conditions.

These plants can be planted outdoors in zones 9b and warmer; in colder climates these make wonderful container plants that can be set out on a patio or deck in the warm summer months, but will need to be kept from freezing in the winter.

FOR CONTAINER PLANTING:

You may plant these starters in individual pots or in clusters in larger pots. The soil should be well draining, sandy soil or potting soil that is for cactus. Make sure you have good drainage in the bottom of the pots, you may want to put an inch or two of rocks or Styrofoam pieces in the bottom of large pots to promote good drainage. The worst thing to do with these plants is keep them too damp. They like it on the dry side rather than too wet. Because they will wilt from being transplanted, you may want to stake the taller ones to keep them growing straight until their roots are re-established – you can also plant these deeper than the original roots to give more support or trim the tops. Keep your plants in a bright area of your home or greenhouse, they are fine in full sun or partial shade. Of course, during the warmer months, they will be happy on your porch or patio. As they grow, if you continue to increase their pot size, they will continue to get taller and soon you will have babies sprouting up all around them in their pots as their offspring drop from their leaves into the soil. It is best to NOT put mulch on the top of the soil in their pots so their babies can reach the soil easily. Make sure to water your newly planted starters **well** when you first put them in their pots, but after that, watering once - twice a week is generally sufficient. Do NOT OVERWATER. Allow soil to dry between waterings. Monthly treatment with a water soluble fertilizer will help them grow strong.

FOR GARDEN PLANTING:

If you are in a warm zone and are planning to plant these outside, select an area with well draining, sandy soil in full sun or partial shade. Space the plants 6" – 10" apart. (you need to leave room for the babies – don't forget!) Water well when you first plant them, but after that, I generally allow mother nature to water them for me when they are planted outside; if you feel you must water them, do so no more than once or twice a week. Because they will wilt from being transplanted, you may want to stake the taller ones to keep them growing straight until their roots are re-established; you can also plant these deeper than the original root to give more support and promote more root growth. To promote more babies, don't mulch the ground where you plant these! The babies will grow much better if allowed to fall directly onto soil rather than mulch. I have never fertilized my plants, but, if you feel the need to do so, I would use a water soluble fertilizer (like Miracle Grow) on them, following the manufacturer's directions.

If you find you need to transplant them when they are larger, the only problem you may find is they 'wilt' and may even lie completely over on the ground after transplanting a larger plant. DON'T DESPAIR! Stake them to keep them growing straight until their roots are re-established. Water them in well in their new place and they will soon be growing to the sky again for you!

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

As with any plant that is transplanted, it is normal for these to wilt from the stress of having their roots disturbed. They may stay wilted looking for 10 days to two weeks. During this period, it is important to NOT OVERWATER THEM. Many people think that watering them more will help them out of the wilt, but overwatering may cause them to rot. Watering more than 2 times a week during these first couple of weeks is not recommended and once a week is generally sufficient. They will recover in their own time as their roots get re-established in their new "home" and soon be growing for you again.

For the taller plants you may have received, you may want to stake them so they remain standing straight up until their roots have re-established themselves and they can hold themselves up. You can also plant them deeper than their original roots to give more support and promote more root growth. Planting directly from this transplanting into full sun will add more stress to the plants. If your final garden destination for them is in full sun, you may want to plant them first in pots and keep in partial shade until they recover; then slowly adjust and move them to the full sun.

If the new growth at the top of the plants should die, simply trim it off and more new growth will appear in a short time. Actually, trimming the tops of these plants will make them more bushy, as they will send out 2-3 new branches from the top where there was only one before.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me.

Onalee@aol.com