

Pencil Plant/Tree/Bush (Euphorbia tirucalli) aka: Rubber Hedge, Milk Bush

These plants aren't actually a cactus - they don't have any thorns to stick you - but they grow easily in dry conditions and make a great addition to a rock garden or even a nice house plant! These plants can grow in to large trees in tropical areas or you can keep them trimmed down into bushes with lots of criss-crossing, round, pencil-like limbs.

These plants are EXCELLENT if you don't have a green thumb, don't like to do much in the garden or like to take long vacations! They make GREAT specimens for your rock garden or in any dry, sunny spot. You can practically plant them and forget them! These plants are hardy to zone 9, can be planted in full sun to bright shade and are PERFECT for xeriscaping; very drought tolerant. In colder climates, they can be planted in containers and brought in during the winter. Treat as a cactus and allow soil to dry between watering.

Cautions: These plants do have a milky sap that is a skin irritant in some people, so take care when trimming your plants and don't allow the sap to get on your skin or in your eyes.

These plants are SUPER EASY to root; simply place each cutting, (cut end down), into some well draining (cactus suitable) soil. I usually bury mine about 3" deep in the soil; leaving the remainder of the stem above ground level. Be sure to pack the soil tightly around the cutting to remove any air pockets and make sure the whole bottom of the cutting has good contact with the soil.

Water sparingly but regularly (don't allow water to stand), water as you would a cactus and within a few weeks you'll have rooted, growing plants! After your plants start growing, allow top 1" of the soil to dry between waterings. The only thing you can do 'wrong' with these plants is to keep them too wet; too dry is better than too wet.

I suggest you keep your plants in a shady (or filtered sun) spot in your yard or home until you see new growth, then you can move to full sun. Bring your plants inside (or protect them outside) when temperatures start to fall into the low 40's or a frost is expected. Do not allow plants to freeze.

This is the most inexpensive way to get a start of these wonderful plants, and the way my grandmother has passed this plant on to friends and neighbors for over 30 years! You'll be amazed how fast these plants grow once they get started!