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# Mother of Thousands Plant Care and Propagation



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# Caring for Mother of Thousands Houseplant

By Lauren Landers

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The aptly named “mother of thousands” says it all! This succulent sprouts tiny baby plants along the edges of its leaves, creating an interesting growth pattern. It also means you could easily fill up your houseplant shelves with plantlets in no time! Here’s how to care for and propagate this amazing houseplant.

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Many houseplants are tricky to propagate; they need rooting hormone and plenty of patience to produce a few rooted cuttings. But the mother of thousands (Kalanchoe) sprouts so easily that we’ve been warned: You may need to share some of these prolific plants with friends

**NOTE: This is a houseplant guide. We do not advocate planting this kalanchoe outdoors as it's invasive in many regions, and must be kept in pots.**



“Baby plantlets” are miniature versions of the mother plant. They drop off and take root in the surrounding soil! Credit: Vinicius R. Souza

## About Mother of Thousands Plants

There are around 125 species of kalanchoe plants, but mother of thousands

(*Kalanchoe laetivirens*) is one of the most popular succulents from the genus. While this plant is native to the dry and arid regions of Madagascar, it has become naturalized in many warm and water-stressed areas thanks to its fast reproductive rate.

## ADVERTISEMENT

Unfortunately, mother of thousands plants are highly invasive in Florida, Texas, and other warm areas where they can survive outside in winter, but these plants are much better behaved indoors! In houseplant collections, mother of thousands are sure to stand out with their bluish-green lance-shaped leaves, which are usually edged with an uncountable number of baby plantlets or “pups.”

These tiny versions of the parent plant may form roots while they’re still attached to their “mother,” or they may detach from the parent plant on their own (or with your help) and form roots wherever they touch soil. As exciting as these baby plants are, mother of thousands have

downward-facing pink or orange flowers  
in winter if they receive enough light.

Like other members of the stonecrop or Crassulaceae family, mother of thousands plants are undemanding about water, humidity, and fertilizer, and they grow best in dry, well-draining soil. Bright, filtered light suits these plants best and, with proper care, they can stretch up to 3 feet tall when mature.

Note: Mother of thousands are toxic to humans and pets if ingested. Their milky sap can be a skin irritant, so be sure to wear gloves when pruning or repotting them!

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## PLANTING

Although mother of thousands plants produce babies quickly, their roots grow relatively slowly and they rarely need repotting. In general, you'll only need to repot these plants if they become rootbound or top heavy, or if baby plants root around the base of their parent plant and you want to move the babies into their own containers.

If you decide to repot your mother of thousands, choose a well-draining pot made of terracotta or another porous material and then follow these quick and easy steps!



Mother of Thousands rarely needs repotting. Credit: [Nesteeo](#)

- Protect your hands with gardening gloves. Then, carefully remove your mother of thousands plant from its old pot by holding the base of the plant in one hand and the pot in the other. Gently shake the pot free or use a butterknife to loosen the soil around the pot's rim before lifting your plant out.
- Add several inches of a well-draining potting mix to the bottom of your new growing container. Potting mixes intended for succulents and cacti work well, or you can make your own DIY potting mix by blending standard potting soil with perlite and sand.
- Position your mother of thousands plant in its new pot so that the plant's root ball is at the same depth that it was growing in its old container.
- Backfill any empty space with more potting mix, water well, and return your plant to a sunny spot!

## Baby Plantlets

## ADVERTISEMENT

- If you need to move baby plantlets out of their mother's pot, carefully dig up the plantlets with your fingers or a spoon when the babies are a few inches tall and have a healthy nest of roots.
- Fill your new growing containers most of the way up with a well-draining potting mix and pre-poke small planting holes with your finger or a chopstick.
- Plant the baby plants in their new pots, water them in, and place them in a sunny location!

## GROWING



Houseplants won't always flower but they often surprise you! The brighter the spot, the more chance of blooms.

Mother of thousands live for about 2 to 3 years. However, the plant will provide new plants to replace itself over and over!

Extend the life of your plants by providing them with the right care and propagating their pups to create new mother of thousand plants!

## Light

Mother of thousands grow best in bright, filtered light and west- or south-facing windows, while direct sun can scorch their leaves. They can also be grown in medium light or under grow lights, but they will leggy in overly shady spots.

## Water

Root rot and overwatering can be a big problem for succulents, and it's important to not overwater these plants. For best results, grow mother of thousands plants

these plants from the bottom is also recommended as they can develop powdery mildew if their leaves stay soggy.

## Fertilizer

Mother of thousands are light feeders and they usually don't need any fertilizer.

However, feeding your plants with a liquid, organic houseplant fertilizer diluted to half strength once every 4 to 6 weeks during the growing season can increase the chances that they'll flower.

## Humidity

Standard indoor humidity and temperature levels are perfect for low maintenance mother of thousands. Just make sure they're never exposed to temperatures below 40°F.

## Seasonal Care

Mother of thousands plants need plenty of light throughout the year and they should not be fertilized in winter. If you

colder months and keep them away from  
drafty windows and heating units!

#### ADVERTISEMENT

In general, these succulents rarely need pruning, although you can pinch back leggy stems to encourage bushier growth and remove damaged leaves if needed. If you want your plants to flower, provide them with more light and fertilizer, and deadhead spent blooms when they fade. A common myth is that the plant die after blooming. This is not true.



*Propagation of mother of thousands.*

Credit: madhu.m

## Propagation

Mother of thousands plants can be propagated from offshoots or seeds, but they're so easy to propagate from pups that there's rarely any reason to propagate them using other techniques. Baby plantlets usually fall off the parent plant on their own, but you can gently remove the plantlets yourself with a gentle twist of your fingers. You'll know the babies are ready to plant if they detach easily from the parent plant's leaves!

## ADVERTISEMENT

- **If the baby plants have rootlets,** pre-poke planting holes in well-draining soil and plant them in their own pots.
- **If the baby plants don't have roots,** place them on top of well-draining soil and keep the soil slightly moist until roots form. Then plant!

## Types

If you love the look of mother of thousands or are drawn to kalanchoes as a whole, here are a two more plants you may want to add to your collection:

- **Mother of Millions:** This kalanchoe (*K. delagoensis*) is easily confused with mother of thousands. However, it produces oodles of babies on the tips of its leaves, which are a bit narrower.
- **'Widow's Thrill' Kalanchoe:** Also known as the florist kalanchoe, this flowering beauty is one of the most reliable bloomers and produces flowers



Mother of millions. Credit: Christina Slow

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## PESTS/DISEASES

Mother of thousands plants are generally problem-free, but they can sometimes develop discolored leaves and other signs of stress. Here are some of the most common:

- **Pests**, like mealybugs, aphids, and spider mites may leave tiny dots on leaves or coat your plants with fine webbing or a sticky residue. However, weekly applications of organic soap or neem oil spray can vanquish these pesky pests.
- **Powdery mildew or rust** can also sometimes occur on mother of thousands if your plants are kept in humid areas or water from the top down. Boosting air flow and bottom watering can prevent these issues.
- **Root rot** is usually fatal to succulents and it typically presents with mushy stems and smelly, black roots. The best way to save plants with root rot is to propagate them!

## WIT AND WISDOM

- Mother of thousands plants have many inventive nicknames and you may also find them sold as devil's backbone plants, Mexican hat plants, chandelier plants, or alligator plants.
- The fast reproductive rate of mother

garden. They also release allelopathic compounds into the soil that make it harder for other plants to grow nearby.

However, this isn't a problem when mother of thousands are grown in their own pots!

### HOUSEPLANT GUIDES

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Lauren Landers



Lauren is a gardener, writer, and public speaker with over a decade of experience helping others learn about gardening, homesteading, and sustainable living. [Read More from Lauren Landers](#)

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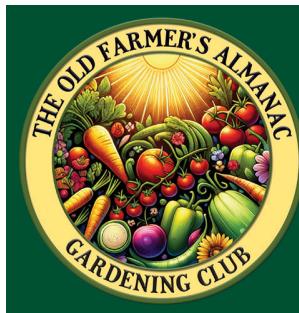
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**Lisa Schmidt (not verified)** 1 month 1 week

ago

Majorly invasive plant. I wouldn't advocate for it  
at least for most of the US.

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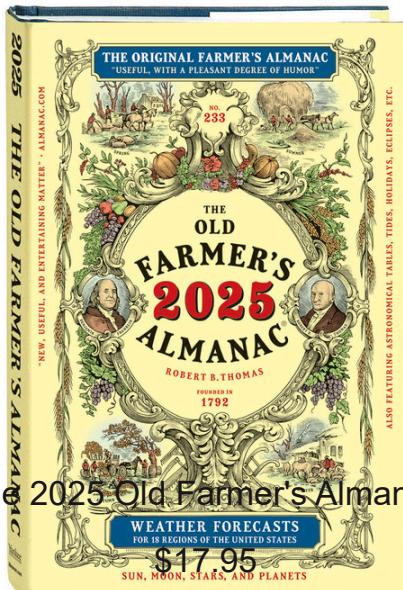
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**Catherine Boeckmann** 1 month ago

NOTE: This is a houseplant guide and  
part of *The Old Farmer's Almanac*  
houseplant library. As mentioned  
above, we do not advocate planting  
kalanchoe outdoors as it's invasive in  
many regions. It should be grown in a  
pot, where it will grow quickly and  
thrive.

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