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How to Care for Inch Plants (Tradescantia)



Photo Credit: Junrong/Shutterstock

Botanical Name:	<i>Tradescantia</i> spp.
Plant Type:	Houseplant
Season:	Part Sun

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A fast grower and easy-care houseplant

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)
Last Updated: January 7, 2025



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Inch plants (Tradescantia) are popular houseplants and outdoor container plants with attractive purple- and silver-striped foliage. They can survive any indoor environment and are perfect for the wanna-be-green thumb! Learn how to grow and care for these easy-care, fast growers.

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Why is it Called an Inch Plant?

Inch plants are creeping plants in the *Tradescantia* (pronounced trad-es-KAN-tee-uh) genus. They are fast-growing and have trailing stems. Other common names include variegated spiderwort.

Leaf nodes on the stem are supposed to be 1 inch apart, hence the common name inch plant. Each segment can produce a new plant, so *Tradescantia* can easily start from cuttings that readily root in moist soil.

While *Tradescantia* is a perennial plant in its native Mexico, it is treated as a house-plant in North America and commonly grown in a hanging pot.

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It is considered an [invasive species](#) in warm regions outside of its home range (including parts of the southeastern U.S.).

inch plants indoors or restricting them to containers outdoors.



Tradescantia zebrina has beautiful trailing stems for a hanging basket.
Credit: Ana Sha

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PLANTING

- Grow in all-purpose indoor potting mix in either a pot or hanging basket.
- Select a location with filtered sun. Keep inch plants out of direct sunlight and out of dark areas, which

- The room temperature should be average (between 55° and 75°F).

GROWING

- Water deeply, but allow the soil to dry partially before watering again. This plant doesn't like to dry out, but it also doesn't like to be constantly wet.
- Water less during the winter months, which is the plant's resting period.
- Provide fertilizer twice a month in the spring and summer; don't fertilize in fall and winter.
- Pinch back to keep this trailing plant contained and promote bushier foliage.
- Removed leggy growth also allows for cuttings that can be used for propagation.
- Plants can be pruned back hard every spring and taken outside on a protected patio in the summer.

Types

There are several types of popular

1. *Tradescantia zebrina* 'Silver Inch Plant' has beautiful purple and green variegated leaves with shiny silver stripes.
2. *T. pallida* 'Purple Heart' has fuzzy, purple foliage instead of green!
3. *T. fluminensis* 'Quicksilver' has variegated white-green foliage and sometimes produces white flowers.
4. *T. nanouk* is a newer inch plant cultivar (patent in 2017) and has pretty pink, green, and white multicolored streaked leaves—it has become quite trendy!

HARVESTING

Inch plants can easily be propagated by cuttings.

1. Snip off a piece of the plant (the cutting should ideally be 3 to 4 inches long) and place the cut end in water.
2. In about a week (or less), the cutting should produce roots.

[Learn more about propagating houseplants.](#)

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

- No serious insect or disease problems.
- Aphids tend to be a problem on the stems and leaves. Monitor for aphids (and other small insects), as they could become an issue if unchecked. To get rid of them, pinch off the infected stems and spray the plant with water.
- Root rot and stem rot can occur in

some individuals.

HOUSEPLANT GUIDES

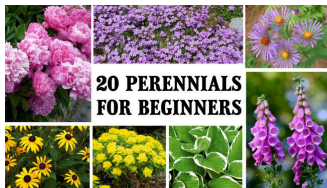
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann

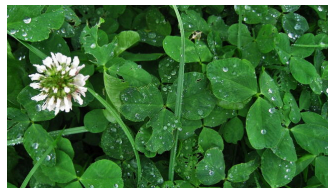


Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Sean (not verified) 4 years 8 months ago

I took a couple of cuttings and placed them in water as advised but none of them have sprouted roots but they are growing new leaves on the stem under water. I'm wondering where I have gone wrong...

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REPLY

Teri L Zeidel (not verified) 5 years 3 months ago

I'm going to try to start this plant from seed. But the seeds came with no sowing instructions. Does anyone know how to sow this plant from seed?

REPLY

trimmed it back severely; I threw the discarded vines in the bushes. I was surprised when the plant recovered quickly, and even more so when I happened upon the vines I had discarded - they had made a lovely ground cover there!

REPLY

Kate (not verified) 5 years 10 months ago

Saw this beauty in an atrium of a university campus bldg. Broke off a piece and put it in my pocket till home, hours later. Put in water and saw roots within two days. It was so easy to make new starts, that I've been giving them as gifts. Have about 10 generations of starts in North kitchen window. They seem to strive for the light. I water often, but don't worry if I miss a few days. They are the easiest plant. Want to put outside as groundcover, eventually. Have plenty to experiment with, in regards to location. Could do without the wandering Jew name. tradescantia zebrina formerly Zebrina pendula is much more fitting for this lovely plant

tabitha (not verified) 6 years 1 month ago

I only had one small vine survive a move. Once it is bigger and stronger if I cut and root the end of it will the original vine I took the cutting from still grow? Such a lonely sad single vine.

REPLY

Missy mitchell (not verified) 5

years 8 months ago

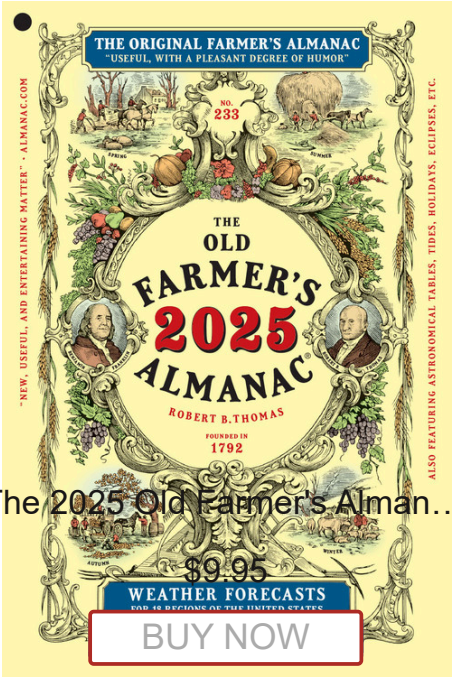
Mine also got so big and heavy! The plant was in hanging basket and the thing pulled the hook out and plant slammed to the ground. I was gone for 4 days and my husband just flipped the plant back in pot and put outside(in to much all sunlight. I lost most of the plant only have a few good vines left seem to be dying quickly! What do I do??

REPLY

“branches,” which should appear from the base of the plant. It will fill out again with time and proper care!

REPLY

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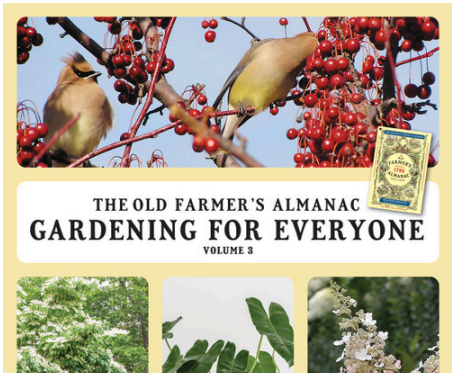
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