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Parlor Palm Guide: Plant Care and How to Grow



Photo Credit: Jus_Ol

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Growing and caring for Chamaedorea elegans

By [Lauren Landers](#)

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Don't let the elegant look of the parlor palm

to grow. Best of all, the parlor palm thrives in low light indoors. If you're on the hunt for a new tabletop or floor plant to bring color into your home, here's how to grow parlor palm.

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About Parlor Palm Plants

Parlor palms first became popular during the Victorian period because they were one of the few houseplants that could tolerate the low light and cool temperatures of unheated and heavily curtained 19th-century parlors. But well over 100 years later, parlor palm remain one of the most popular and widely grown houseplants thanks to their fetching foliage and easy-care vibe!



A potted *Chamaedorea elegans* makes a lovely tabletop green plant. Credit: Jus_Ol

Hailing from the rainforests of southern

kept outdoors in shady spots in Zones 10 through 12. When grown in the garden, these mini palms can stretch up to 16 feet tall, and they occasionally produce berries and fragrant yellow or orange flowers. As houseplants, parlor palm usually grow between 1 and 6 feet tall, and they rarely bloom; however, indoor parlor palm still attract attention with their bright green leaves and slender, arching stems that add vertical interest to any room you grow them in.

If you love the tropical look of palms but don't want the fuss, parlor palms are one of the best palm plants to try. Not only do these plants tolerate low light, but they also don't need much humidity or fertilizer, and they're usually pest-free. On top of that, parlor palm are purr-fectly safe for cats and dogs!

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PLANTING

While it's always a good idea to repot new plants when you bring them home, parlor palms don't like or need to be repotted often, and they should only be repotted every other year or less. These plants produce shallow roots that like to be snug in their pots, and they can suffer from transplant shock if their roots are disturbed too often. However, if your palm has outgrown its pot or its potting soil has become spongy and degraded, repotting may be in order!

- Choose a well-draining growing container that's about 1 to 2 inches wider than your palm's existing pot.
- While parlor palm can be repotted in any season, they rebound faster if they're repotted in spring.
- Remove the palm from its pot by holding the plant's stems in one hand and wiggling the pot free with your other hand. If the

- Add several inches of standard potting mix to the base of your plant's new growing container. If desired, amend the soil with a bit of compost.
- Gently tease apart any encircling roots (if needed), and then position the palm in its new pot at the same depth the plant was growing in its old container.
- Add more potting mix to fill in the space around the plant roots and firm the soil around the plant stems to keep them upright.
- Give your plant a deep drink of water and return it to its original growing spot.

GROWING



Planting *chamaedorea elegans* houseplant in a pot. Credit: Rigsby Photo

Parlor palms are long-lived houseplants that usually last for at least 10 to 20 years; however, these palms can live for 40 years or

ter, and nutrients is the best way to preserve its good looks and keep these easy-going plants around for many years to come.

Light

Although parlor palms grow best in bright, indirect sun, they can grow in low light, too.

East- or north-facing windows tend to work best for these plants while south-facing windows and direct sun can scorch their leaves.

If your home receives lots of bright light, position your parlor palm several feet away from your windows or install sheer curtains to filter out some of that bright sun!

Water

Parlor palms need to be watered regularly, but it's important not to overdo it! These plants are prone to root rot in soggy soil, and they should only be watered when the top 1 to 2 inches of soil feels dry. If you're not sure if your plant needs water or not, err on the side of under-watering, and be sure to dump excess water out of your plant's saucer to keep your palm from sitting in water.

Fertilizer

Like other houseplants, parlor palms need fertilizer from time to time, but they don't need a lot of it. For best results, feed these plants once or twice a year in spring and summer with an organic, liquid plant fertilizer diluted to half or quarter strength. Fish or kelp emulsion are particularly good for these plants, but parlor palm also love compost or worm casting tea!

Humidity

While parlor palms come from the tropics, they don't need high humidity, and they're perfectly content as long as indoor humidity levels stay above 40%. If your home gets very dry in winter, add a humidifier or pebble tray beneath your plant to raise humidity levels and keep palm fronds from developing brown edges. Keeping these plants away from drafty windows, heating units, and vents helps, too.

Seasonal Parlor Palm Care

Parlor palms need more water in spring and summer, and they should not be fertilized at all in winter. Some growers may choose to move their palms outdoors into a shady section of their garden in summer. Just keep in

should be moved back indoors before temperatures cool below 50°F!

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Throughout the year, feel free to cut away yellow or damaged leaves to improve the look of your plant, but steer clear of any major pruning. Despite their multi-stemmed look, potted parlor plants are actually multiple single-stemmed plants growing in a single pot, and pruning the tops off your plant can prove fatal to your palm!

Propagation

Although parlor palms can be propagated from seeds or root division, propagating these plants is a challenge that's best left to the

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Types

Parlor palms are closely related to several other types of palm plants that stay small, produce slender cane-like stems, and tolerate relatively cool temperatures. If you love the look of parlor palm, you may also enjoy these plants!

- **Bamboo Palms:** Also native to Mexico and Central America, bamboo palms are named for their segmented stems that look a lot like bamboo!
- **Cat Palms:** Although they grow slowly, cat palms get a bit bigger than parlor palms and max out at around 8 to 10 feet high indoors.



PESTS/DISEASES

Parlor palms are occasionally plagued by pests, but the most common issues that affect these plants stem from overwatering and excess sun!

- **Pests**, like scale, aphids, mealybugs, and whiteflies, are more likely to occur on outdoor palms than indoor plants. If you move your palm outside in summer, check it carefully for pests before bringing it back indoors, and treat any pests you find with an organic insecticidal soap or neem oil spray.
- **Browning leaf tips** usually develop when parlor palms receive too much light.

brown if they're underwatered or if homes get too dry in winter.

- **Overwatering** is a common problem with parlor palm that causes plant leaves to turn yellow or brown. If plants are severely overwatered, they may develop fungal issues, like root rot or leaf spot, which should be addressed quickly if you want to save your plant!



Often browned leaves are due to under-watering. Credit: Katerina_Klimovc

WIT AND WISDOM

- Parlor palms have lots of nicknames, including neanthe bella palm, dwarf mountain palm, and good luck palm!
- These plants were symbols of sophistication during the Victorian era, and you can often spot them in period films and TV shows, including Downton Abbey!
- Parlor palms are sometimes used in feng

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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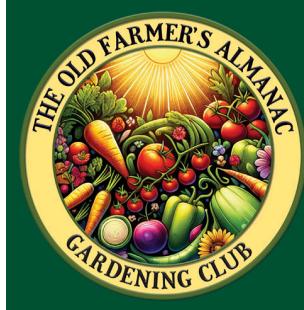
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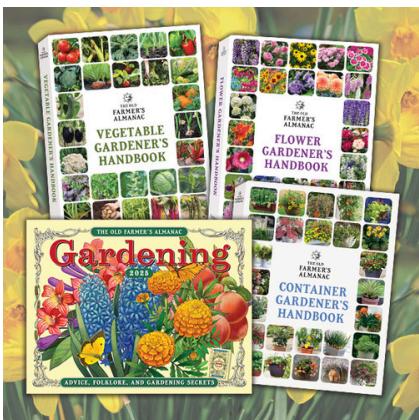
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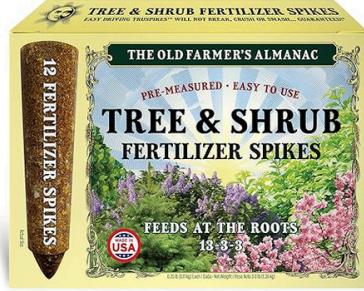


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