

# *Know and Grow Pothos and Philodendrons*



*Costa*  
Farms®

# *Why We Love Philodendron and Pothos*

Philodendron and pothos are two of the most popular houseplants around. It's no wonder why. They're delightfully versatile and most common varieties adapt well to average household conditions. They're a cinch to care for!

While both plants offer nostalgic charm, having been loved by houseplant growers for generations, there are also plenty of fresh, new varieties to seek out and collect.

Dig in for tips on growing and displaying gorgeous, healthy philodendron and pothos plants in your home.

—The Costa Farms  
GARDEN GURU™ Team





# Philodendron and Pothos: What's the Difference?

Take a look at a pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*) and heartleaf philodendron. They look similar: Both are climbing vines with heart-shaped leaves. They form knobby adventitious roots along the stems. And they're closely related. Members of the aroid family, they're kin to many other common houseplants. Other aroid cousins you may be familiar with include Chinese evergreen (*Aglaonema*), elephant's ear (*Alocasia*), Anthurium, Dieffenbachia, Monstera, peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*), arrowhead vine (*Syngonium*), and ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*).

So what are the differences?

## **Look at the Leaf Texture**

If you compare the two, you'll see pothos tends to have more textural leaves (and thicker). Philodendron leaves tend to be smoother (and not as thick).

Philodendron foliage tends to lay flat; most pothos varieties look like the leaf has been folded up the middle.

New leaves offer a telltale sign, too: Philodendrons emerge in a protective wrapper. Pothos leaves unfurl without a covering.

## **Pay Attention to the Petiole**

The petiole (leaf stem) also gives a clue. Pothos petioles usually have a groove running between the leaf and the plant's stem. Philodendron petioles are typically round and smooth.



**'Marble Queen'  
Pothos**



**Brasil heartleaf  
philodendron (top left),  
grows beautifully with  
golden pothos (middle  
right), and Cebu Blue  
pothos (bottom left).  
Photo courtesy  
@plantdaddyphg**



# *Growing Philodendron and Pothos*

Philodendron and pothos tolerate a wide range of growing conditions. The right spot to makes the difference between a good- and great-looking plant.

## **Light**

When it comes to light, the basic rule is the more, the better. Both tolerate low light, but grow faster and better in medium to bright spots. It's best, generally, to avoid spots with direct sun—especially in the afternoon hours. It can cause unsightly sunburn on the foliage.

## **Water**

As with most houseplants, it's better to underwater your philodendron and pothos than to overwater them. When the plants stay too wet, the roots suffocate, die, and

rot. Water as the top inch of the potting mix dries to the touch. That way the potting mix never stays wet or soggy for extended periods.

## **Humidity**

Native to tropical regions, these plants enjoy high relative humidity levels. (Pothos hail from the Solomon Islands in Southeast Asia; philodendron from Central America). Happily, both tolerate average to low humidity. If the air in your home is dry, boosting humidity with a small humidifier is beneficial.

## **Drafts**

Avoid placing your plants near a drafty window or heating/air-conditioning vent. Drafts can cause the foliage to go yellow prematurely.





### **Fertilizing**

Fertilize philodendron and pothos regularly during the growing season to keep them looking their best. There are two basic ways to fertilize: with a time-release product or with a water-soluble product.

Time-release fertilizers are the easiest. They are designed to slowly release nutrients over time, constantly feeding plants. Just add some in the spring and you're set for the year. A variety of brands should be available at your local garden center.

You need to mix up water-soluble fertilizers each time you want to apply them. But many people prefer them because they deliver nutrients in greater quantities. It's easier to see a burst of new growth or better plant coloration after using these products.

No matter what type of fertilizer you use, don't exceed the directions on the product packaging.

### **Repotting**

Repot philodendron and pothos as they become rootbound. This keeps them vigorous and healthy. Not sure when they're rootbound? The easiest way is to slip them out of the pot. If you see a tangled mass

of roots tightly circling the inside of the pot, it's time to repot them.

When repotting, select a container that's 2 to 3 inches than the container it's currently in. Then spread out the roots as much as you can. Avoid the urge to go from a small pot to a large one. A pot that's too big can hold moisture too long and cause overwatering issues.

You can repot at any time of the year. Many people prefer early spring, just as the plants start to push out new growth.

### **Potting Mix**

When repotting, select a high-quality mix designed for use on indoor or container plants. Philodendron and pothos don't like wet roots. A well-draining mix is better than formulated for extra moisture retention.

## **Pruning Philodendron and Pothos**

In good growing conditions, many vining varieties of philodendron and pothos can grow out of bounds, giving you reason to prune them back. You can do this at any time of year. Give them a haircut to either prevent the vines from getting too long or to help keep them full and bushy.

The best way to prune is to cut the stem just above a leaf. (That way you don't end up with a dead stub between the last leaf and where you cut.) When pruning, keep in mind that your plant will push out new growth from junction of the top leaf or two remaining on the stem.

You don't need to worry about non-vining varieties of philodendron (like 'Super Atom') because these types of plants don't have long sections of stem (called internodes) between the leaves.



# Troubleshooting Tips

Philodendron and pothos experience few problems. Here are a few issues you may run into.

## Yellow Leaves

No matter how well you grow philodendron and pothos, you'll see some yellow leaves. Yellowing and dropping of the oldest leaves is natural and nothing to worry about.

If more than a leaf or two at a time yellow, or it's not just the oldest leaves, look for:

- ☞ Overwatering. If the potting mix stays too moist for too long, the roots start to suffocate.
- ☞ Drafts. Exposure to air that's considerably cooler or warmer than the ambient temperature causes leaves to yellow.

## Leaves that Have Pale, Bleached Spots

Philodendron and pothos can take quite a bit of light when grown indoors. But if they've been in low-light conditions (either at the grower or in your home) and move to a spot where they get some direct sun, they can suffer from sunburn. Sunburned patches won't heal, but happily, they don't spread.

## You See Brown Spots on the Leaves

A couple of diseases can infect philodendron and pothos causing yellow-ringed brown spots. Cut infected leaves from the plant. Dip your pruning shears in rubbing alcohol between each cut to prevent the spread of the disease. Avoid misting your plants, as well. This can help spread disease.



## Leaves Go Limp

When these tropical plants are exposed to cold temperatures (40°F/4°C), the cold can wilt the leaves. And they fail to recover. The plants may put out new growth again. It depends on how cold they were and how long they were exposed to those temperatures. If you live in a cold-winter climate, tightly wrap tropical plants in plastic bags before leaving the store. This prevents your plants from getting frostbite between the store and your car.

The plants will also wilt when they dry out severely. They should recover quickly after a good watering.

## New Growth is Green Instead of Variegated

If variegated cultivars, such as 'Brasil' philodendron and 'Marble Queen' pothos don't get enough light, they can sacrifice variegation on their new growth.

## Plants Seem Weak with Little New Growth

A lack of vigor can represent a few factors, including:

- ☞ Being Rootbound. Most philodendron and pothos tolerate being rootbound. But being severely rootbound for extended periods weakens them.
- ☞ Nutrient Deficiency. These species are relatively fast growers, and do best when fertilized regularly in the growing season. If they go too long without added fertilization, new growth will come slowly and weakly.

## Leaves with Holes

Most insect pests leave philodendron and pothos alone. Holes, especially when they have brown edges, are usually caused by physical damage, either in shipping or in the store. While damage like this won't heal, it doesn't get worse. You can simply remove the damaged foliage.

## Why Are My Leaves Dripping Water?

If you see your philodendron or pothos plant drip water from the tips of the foliage, it's easy to be concerned. But happily, this is nothing to worry about.

It's a physiological condition called guttation. It occurs when the plant's roots absorb more moisture than the leaves release during the day. The result is that your plant sheds the excess moisture from the leaf.

It's a common misconception that guttation is caused by overwatering. Happily, this isn't the case. But too little light can encourage its occurrence.



# Top Philodendron Varieties

## Heartleaf Philodendron (*Philodendron hederaceum*)

The classic variety, this tried-and true favorite features rich green, heart-shaped leaves and an easy-growing nature. It's generally one of the most agreeable houseplants around. It tolerates and adapts to a wide range of environmental conditions.

Grow it in hanging baskets, horizontally, or let it climb a totem pole.

Heartleaf philodendron has gone by several botanical names over the years; if you see reference to *Philodendron cordatum*, *Philodendron oxycardium*, or *Philodendron scandens*, they all refer to this same plant.



## Brasil Philodendron (*Philodendron hederaceum* 'Brasil')

A variegated form of classic heartleaf philodendron, 'Brasil' earned its name for the similarity in coloration to the Brazilian flag (green with a yellow center).

It's as easy to grow as heartleaf philodendron, tolerating as wide of a range of growing conditions.

## Brandi Philodendron (*Philodendron brandtianum*)

This ultra-trendy species features heart-shaped leaves variegated with metallic silver tones. Like other climbing philodendrons, its leaves will grow much larger in warm, bright conditions and when the plant climbs up vertically.

It tends to be more sensitive to overwatering than heartleaf philodendron.



Photo courtesy  
@plantdaddyph





**Philodendron Selloum**  
(*Philodendron bipinnatifidum*)

Unlike many of the many of the common philodendron species, *Philodendron selloum* doesn't climb. A larger, shrub-like plant, it prefers medium to bright light and higher humidity levels than heartleaf philodendron.

It's often confused with *Monstera deliciosa*, and is also called *Thaumatococcus bipinnatifidum*. It's often grown as a landscape shrub in the tropics.



**Super Atom Philodendron**  
(*Philodendron 'Super Atom'*)

An extra-small selection, Super Atom is a form of *Philodendron selloum* that stays under a couple of feet in height. It features dark green, somewhat crinkled leaves, and a tight, vase-like form.

Super Atom is more durable, too, holding up to low light, low humidity, and inconsistent watering.

**Xanadu Philodendron**  
(*Philodendron 'Winterbourn'*)

Xanadu is a dwarf, slower-growing version of *Philodendron selloum*. It features thicker leaves that stay smaller, as well.

Like *Philodendron selloum*, it likes medium to bright light indoors and average to high relative humidity levels. Though it's commonly employed as a shrub in tropical landscapes, Xanadu also a fine houseplant.



**Red Congo Philodendron**  
(*Philodendron 'Red Congo'*)

Red Congo is another bushy philodendron that doesn't climb. It has large, tropical-looking dark green leaves. It's earned its common name because the new foliage emerges a rich burgundy-red color.

Red Congo prefers bright light, warm temperatures, and average to above-average relative humidity indoors.







**Prince of Orange Philodendron  
(Philodendron 'Prince of Orange')**

This variety is like Red Congo, except the new growth emerges a rich, coppery-orange color before fading to green.

Like Red Congo, Prince of Orange can grow 2 feet tall and wide over time, though it's a relatively slow-growing variety indoors as a houseplant.



**Philodendron grazielae**

The least-common philodendron in our collection, Philodendron grazielae is the most demanding. It features elegant, heart-shaped leaves on weak stems that want to climb, making it perfect for growing on a totem.

Very slow growing, it likes a medium to bright spot with indirect light and above-average humidity. It's more susceptible to root rot than other varieties if it stays too wet.

**Moonlight Philodendron  
(Philodendron 'Moonlight')**

Perfect for brightening your home, Moonlight philodendron features foliage that unfurls in a bright chartreuse color, then aging to mid green.

Give it bright light for best coloring, and average to high humidity to prevent brown leaf tips and edges curing the winter.





# Top Pothos Varieties

## Golden Pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*)

Easy and fast-growing, golden pothos is one of the most identifiable houseplants. It features heart-shaped mid-green leaves variegated with streaks of gold.

Golden pothos grows fastest—and is happiest, in medium to bright light. You may find that in brighter light, the leaves show more

variegation, too—but like with many plants, the genetics of the individual cutting play as much of a role in how much variegation is expressed as the growing conditions. Golden pothos is ideal for hanging baskets, growing up a

totem, or growing horizontally on a mantle, tabletop, or even around the perimeter of your favorite window.

Its versatility and easy-growing nature make golden pothos an ideal houseplant for beginners.

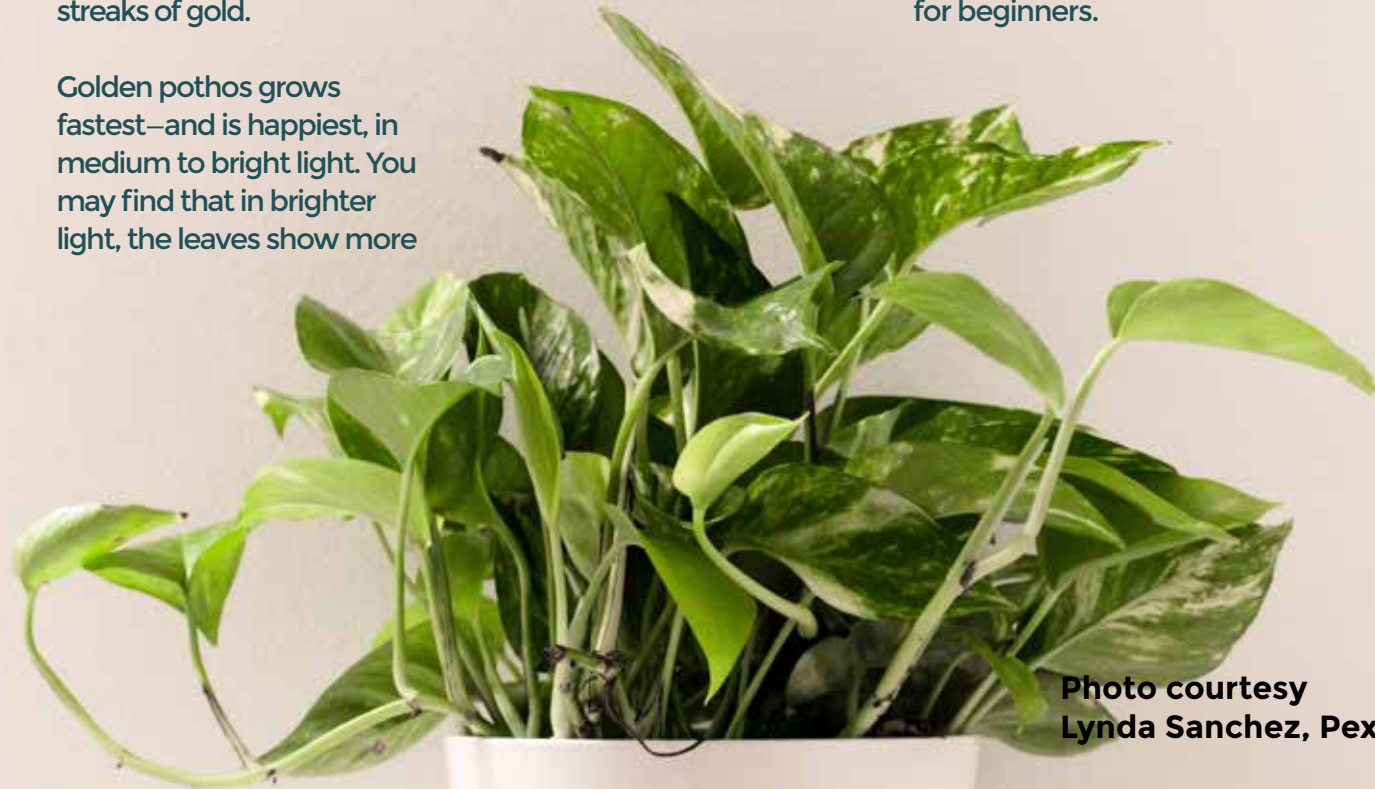


Photo courtesy  
Lynda Sanchez, Pexels

## Neon Pothos (*Epipremnum* 'Neon')

Perhaps the boldest and brightest pothos around, Neon features bright chartreuse-green new growth that usually fades to a lime-green shade.

In low-light situations, you'll often find the foliage's bright color fades a bit to a deeper or richer green. If this happens, adding more light (natural or artificial) should bring back the brightness. That said, it is natural for Neon pothos to produce some leaves from time to time that have a streak or splash of dark green. It's nothing to worry about, nor a sign that there's anything wrong with your plant.

It thrives in the same range of growing conditions as golden pothos and doesn't require any special care.







**Marble Queen Pothos  
(Epipremnum 'Marble  
Queen')**

The most readily available variety (after golden pothos), it's easy to see why Marble Queen is so popular.

This no-fuss selection has the same care needs as golden pothos, but features fabulous mid-green foliage streaked with creamy white.

Though vigorous, Marble Queen is a bit slower of a grower than golden and Neon pothos because of its variegation. The less green in the leaves, the less chlorophyll there is—so the slower it grows.

In brighter spots, Marble Queen typically sports more variegation than in low light. Cuttings taken from highly variegated stems yield plants with more cream and white.

**Manjula Pothos  
(Epipremnum 'Manjula')**

Manjula is a newer variety of pothos that produces highly variegated, often variable leaves. On a single plant, you may see leaves that are entirely streaked in cream (similar to Marble

Queen), edged in green with a creamy-white center, and combinations the two.

The easiest way to discern Manjula from other varieties is that its leaves are wider at the base than the others. The leaf bases also tend to undulate, so the leaves don't lay flat.

Manjula foliage is often larger than other varieties when its growing happily, but despite this fact, the plant tends to grow more slowly than golden and Marble Queen.

Its care needs are the same as other varieties, making it a good choice for beginners.





**Jessenia Pothos  
(Epipremnum 'Jessenia')**

Jessenia is a recent variety that features mid-green leaves variegated with streaks of chartreuse. Its leaf pattern is similar to Marble Queen and grows like it.

Jessenia is not as commonly available as other varieties.



**Pearls and jade Pothos  
(Epipremnum Pearls and Jade)**

Pearls and Jade features smaller foliage than most other varieties. It also grows more slowly. Each leaf is irregularly variegated with streaks, splashes, and blotches of cream, silver, and white.



**Cebu Blue Pothos  
(Epipremnum pinnatum  
'Cebu Blue')**

While not variegated, Cebu Blue is exciting because it has blue-green foliage with a metallic sheen. Over time, if grown vertically, the leaves can develop bold cuts, like Monstera.





# Behind the Scenes

Here at Costa Farms, we grow millions of philodendron and pothos plants each year. Our growers are always testing new ways to grow our current varieties. Plus, we're on the lookout for new varieties so ensure we can offer the very best options

at your local retailer. Our growers tend each plant by hand, nurturing each from a tiny cutting. At our Exotic Angel® Plants greenhouses, all of our philodendron and pothos are propagated from our own cuttings. Our growers only select the healthiest shoots from our

mother plants (below) and the most highly variegated pothos shoots.

If you have questions or issues about your Costa Farms philodendrons or pothos, reach out to us at [information@costafarms.com](mailto:information@costafarms.com). We're happy to help.



## How to Get Big Leaves

Climbing varieties of philodendrons and pothos can develop larger leaves (more than a foot long!) when grown vertically, such as up a totem, and in warm, bright conditions. The older the plant and the better it likes the spot, the larger the leaves will be.







Photo courtesy  
@plantdaddypgh