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#H4

How to care for your Kalanchoe

Steps for Success!



#1



#2



#3

Q: How do I water my Kalanchoe ?

Although Kalanchoe look like something that could grow in a desert, they need some water occasionally. Use #1 Miracle Gro Potting Mix for transplanting and re potting. Test the moisture in the pot with your finger. When the soil feels dry, water thoroughly. Then wait until the soil feels dry again. It usually takes one to two weeks for the pot to dry out. Be sure to remove all drainage water from the decorative cover or from the saucer after you are done watering. Just as we humans don't like to have constantly wet feet, no plant will do well if it sits in puddle of water for any length of time.

Q: How do I fertilize my Kalanchoe?

Kalanchoe in flower need only very little fertilizer. Generally the plants should have a good supply when you buy them in the store, so you should not need to worry for the first few months. If you want to keep your Kalanchoe past the first flower, start fertilizing only when you see new growth on the plant. Use **#2 All Purpose Miracle Gro** fertilizer once every second week at 1/4 to 1/2 of the recommended rate. Supplement with a small amount of slow release **#3 Osmacote** fertilizer.

Q: When will my Kalanchoe start to flower?

Many plants have a very precise built-in clock. This clock measures the length of days vs. nights, and allows the plants to determine the time of the year. Plants use this information to decide when to grow new leaves, or when to flower, or when to drop the leaves and go into hibernation. Kalanchoe are so called short-day plants. Like Mums or Poinsettias, Kalanchoe will begin to make flowers when the days are shorter than 11 hours. From then on it takes about 3-4 months for the flowers to develop. (Meanwhile, research has proven that the plants do not measure the duration of daylight but rather the daily duration of darkness; so technically all short-day plants should be called long-night plants)

Q: How do I provide short days for my Kalanchoe?

Even a small amount of light can prevent your Kalanchoe from flowering. If you turn on your living room lights for half an hour every evening or if a street lamp shines through the window, the plant will not feel like making any flowers. Probably the best method is to line a cardboard box with black plastic (e.g. from a garbage bag) and to cover the plant every evening at 5 PM and to uncover it every morning at 8 AM. This must be done for a minimum of 8 weeks until you can see the flower buds. You should also not miss a day, since this can cause the plant to develop "green" or misformed flowers.

Q: Could I just put my plant in a dark room for some weeks?

No. It is short duration of the day, not low light intensity that makes the plant flower. As a matter of fact, the more sun the plant receives during the 11 hours of daylight, the faster it will flower and the more flowers will develop. A plant that is kept in absolute darkness will not induce flowers at all. Most likely Kalanchoe will not survive 6 weeks in darkness, hardy as they are.

Q: Should I cut the old flowers off my Kalanchoe?

After all the flowers have died, cut off all the flower stems. Cut right back to the second or third leaf below the old flowers on each side shoot. After pruning, give the plant only very little water and no fertilizer until you see new growth on the shoots. Only then start watering more regularly and start feeding the plants with regular pot-plant fertilizer at 1/2 strength every 2 weeks or so.