

A FREE CARE GUIDE FOR BEGINNERS

# Rooted & Growing



## *Brooke Elaine's Golden Pothos Care Guide*

Simple, confidence-building care for your water-grown plant



LIGHT · WATER · NUTRIENTS · TROUBLESHOOTING  
PRUNING & PROPAGATION · MOVING TO SOIL · SAFETY

GROWN & HAND-ROOTED BY BROOKE ELAINE

## START HERE

# Welcome — you already have a head start

The plant in your jar is a Golden Pothos cutting (*Epipremnum aureum*). It is not a seed, a gamble, or a science project. It already has living roots. Your job for the next few weeks is simply to keep those roots in clean water, give the leaves comfortable light, and let the plant settle in.

If you have never kept a houseplant alive, this is an excellent place to begin. Golden Pothos is one of the most forgiving houseplants there is. It shows you what it needs, it is slow to give up, and it recovers from most beginner mistakes.

Everything in this guide is written for someone starting from zero. Nothing here requires special equipment, a green thumb, or a schedule you have to keep perfectly.

**WHAT MAKES YOURS DIFFERENT**

Your cutting was rooted **in water**, not in soil. Those pale, slightly translucent roots are water roots, and they are already adapted to living submerged.

That is why your plant can live happily in its jar without ever seeing a pot of dirt — as long as it eventually gets nutrients (page 8).

 **What's inside**

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**HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE**

You do not need to read it front to back. Skim the first four sections today, then keep the guide nearby. When something looks wrong, go straight to **Troubleshooting** — it is built as a look-it-up table, not an essay.

## SECTION ONE

# Your first 24 hours

Do less than you think. Settling in is the whole job today.

Your plant has just been handled, carried, and set down somewhere new. Give it a calm first day. Almost every beginner problem comes from doing *too much* in the first week, not too little.

## Four things to do today

- 1 Pick a spot with bright, indirect light.** A few feet back from a window that gets good daylight is ideal. Skip the windowsill where hot midday sun lands directly on the leaves.
- 2 Check the waterline.** The roots should be fully covered. The leaves and the base of the leaf stems should stay dry and above the water.
- 3 Then leave it alone.** Do not repot it, fertilize it, trim it, or move it from room to room. One change at a time is how you learn what your plant likes.
- 4 Take a photo.** Today is day one. In a month you will not remember how long the vine was, and the photo settles the argument.

*“Roots drink. Leaves breathe.  
Keep the roots wet and the leaves dry.”*

IF YOU REMEMBER ONE LINE, REMEMBER THIS ONE

### PERFECTLY NORMAL IN WEEK ONE

- No visible new growth at all
- A slight droop for a day or two after the move
- One older leaf yellowing while the rest stay green
- Roots that look pale, thin, and a little see-through

### WORTH A CLOSER LOOK

- Water that smells sour or looks murky
- Roots that feel soft, slimy, or look black
- Several leaves yellowing at once
- Leaves sitting *in* the water

Turn to Troubleshooting on page 10.



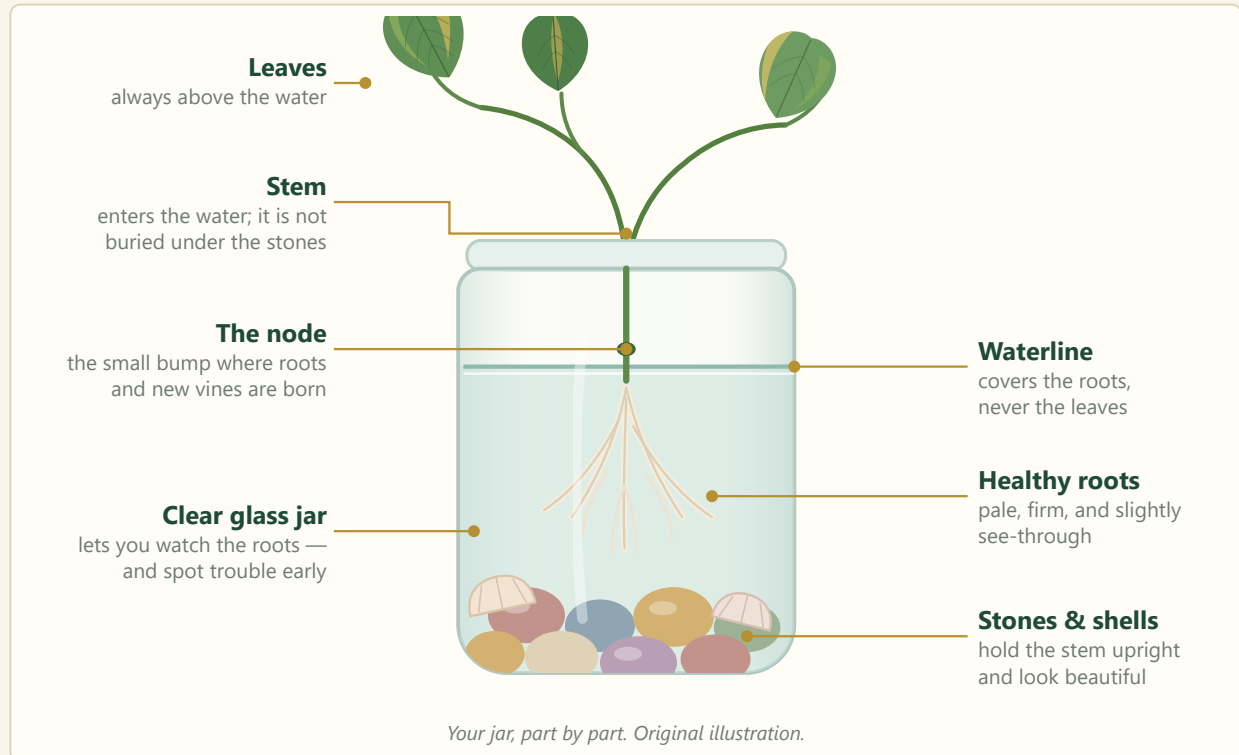
### Start a photo log today

Set the jar in the same place, hold your phone at the same height, and take one picture. Repeat on the first of every month. Golden Pothos grows slowly enough that photos are the only honest way to see progress — and it is genuinely fun to look back after a year.

## SECTION TWO

# Understanding your jar

Six parts, and what each one is actually doing.



## ABOUT THOSE STONES AND SHELLS

They do two real jobs: they weigh the cutting down so it does not tip or float, and they hold the stem at a sensible angle. They also look lovely, which is not nothing.

What they do **not** do is feed your plant. Stones and shells are decorative materials, not fertilizer. Anything they release into the water is unpredictable and nowhere near a complete diet.

## THE TAKEAWAY

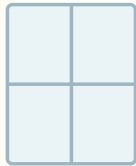
Plain water plus pretty stones will keep a rooted cutting *alive* for a good while. To keep it actively *growing* — new leaves, longer vines — it eventually needs real nutrients. That is covered on page 8.

## SECTION THREE

# Light and location

Bright — but not blasted.

Golden Pothos does best in **bright, indirect light**, and it will survive in surprisingly dim spots. Survive and thrive are two different things, though, and light is the single biggest lever you have over how fast your plant grows.



### On the sill

direct sun through glass — too intense, and algae loves it

### 2–6 feet back • ideal

Plenty of daylight, and no beam of sun landing on the leaves.  
*A sheer curtain does the same.*

### Far from any window

it will hang on, but growth slows and the gold marbling fades

### A PLAIN-ENGLISH TEST FOR “BRIGHT, INDIRECT LIGHT”

Stand where the jar sits at midday. If you could comfortably read a paperback without turning on a lamp, the light is bright enough. If a beam of sunshine lands directly on the leaves for more than an hour or two, that is *direct* sun — move the plant back.

|                          | BRIGHT, INDIRECT LIGHT                                          | NOT ENOUGH LIGHT                              | TOO MUCH DIRECT SUN                                    |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Where it happens</b>  | A few feet back from a bright window, or beside a sheer curtain | A dim corner, or a room with no window nearby | A sunny sill, or the path of hot afternoon sun         |
| <b>The leaves</b>        | Firm and glossy, gold marbling crisp                            | Flat dark green, thinner and smaller          | Bleached patches, dry edges, scorched spots            |
| <b>Growth</b>            | Steady new leaves in spring and summer                          | Very slow, with long bare stem between leaves | Stalls; leaves curl or crisp at the tips               |
| <b>The gold marbling</b> | Holds, and often improves on new leaves                         | Fades — new leaves arrive plainer             | Bleaches toward white; that is damage, not variegation |
| <b>What to do</b>        | Nothing. Turn the jar a quarter turn weekly.                    | Move it nearer a window, or add a grow light  | Pull it back a few feet, or hang a sheer curtain       |

### TURN THE JAR WEEKLY

Leaves lean toward light. If the jar never moves, the vine grows lopsided and the foliage crowds onto one side. A quarter turn once a week keeps it balanced.

### KEEP IT OUT OF THE WIND

Avoid heating and cooling vents, drafty doorways, and the top of a radiator. Moving air dries leaves and evaporates jar water fast, and a cold winter pane will chill any leaf touching it.

### IF YOUR HOME IS GENUINELY DARK

A modest LED grow light solves it — no greenhouse required. A small clip-on or bulb-style light a foot or two away, on a plug-in timer for roughly 8–12 hours a day, is plenty for one jar. You are supplementing daylight, not replacing the sun.

## SECTION FOUR · PART ONE

# Water care

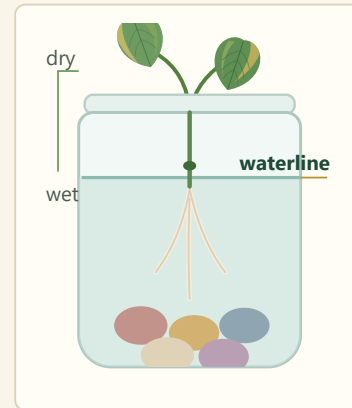
The waterline, topping off, and what to put in the jar.

## How high should the water be?

High enough to cover **all of the roots** and the node they grew from. Low enough that **no leaf or leaf stem sits in the water** — usually an inch or two below the rim.

Fix that level against a landmark you can see at a glance: the top of the stones, or a curve in the glass.

A leaf left sitting in water softens, rots, and fouls the jar while it does. If one is riding low, lift the stem and re-seat it in the stones, or lower the water slightly.



*Roots under. Leaves over.*

## Topping off versus changing the water

### TOP OFF — ABOUT ONCE A WEEK

Water evaporates, especially in heated or air-conditioned rooms. When the level has dropped, pour in enough room-temperature water to bring it back up to your landmark. That is the whole task.

### CHANGE IT — EVERY 1 TO 2 WEEKS

Tip out the old water and refill with fresh. Do it **sooner** if the water looks cloudy, has a film, smells at all, or if the jar has been sitting in warmth or sun.

## What water to use

- **Room temperature, always.** Cold tap water shocks warm roots and hot water damages them. Let it stand until it feels neither cool nor warm on your wrist.
- **Ordinary tap water is usually fine.** Letting it stand uncovered for a few hours lets some chlorine escape, though that will not remove dissolved minerals.
- **White crust on the glass** is mineral deposit from hard water, not a disease. Wipe it off at the next water change; if it keeps returning, switch to filtered or distilled water.
- **Skip softened water** from a salt-based softener where you can — the added sodium does the roots no favors.

### Your two-minute weekly routine

Pick one day. Sunday morning, trash night, whenever. Then run through these five checks — it genuinely takes about two minutes.

- |                                                            |                                                             |                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Look</b> — is the water clear? | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Top off</b> to your landmark    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Peek</b> at the roots — pale and firm? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Sniff</b> — any sour smell?    | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Turn</b> the jar a quarter turn |                                                                    |

## SECTION FOUR · PART TWO

# Clean water, algae, and healthy roots

How to tell when the jar needs attention — and how to give it.

## WHEN WATER HAS GONE OFF

Fresh jar water is clear and smells like nothing. Water that needs changing looks **cloudy or milky**, feels **slippery** inside the glass, or smells **sour or swampy**. It is not a mystery illness — it is bacteria feeding on something organic, usually a dropped leaf or a dying root.

## GIVING THE JAR A PROPER CLEAN

- 1 Lift the plant out, holding the stem low, and rest it on a damp paper towel.
- 2 Tip the stones and shells into a colander; rinse until the water runs clear.
- 3 Scrub the jar with hot water and a bottle brush. For stubborn film, plain white vinegar works — then rinse several times.
- 4 Rinse the roots under lukewarm water. Support them; never scrub or pull.
- 5 Reassemble, refill to your waterline, and put it back.

## NO SOAP. EVER.

Dish soap, bleach and cleaning sprays leave residue that clings to porous stones and shells and washes straight onto the roots. Hot water and a brush are all you need. If you use vinegar, rinse until you cannot smell it.

## MANAGING ALGAE

The green film on the glass and stones is algae. It needs two things: **light** and **nutrients in the water** — and a clear glass jar in a sunny spot hands it both. A light haze is cosmetic; a heavy bloom clouds the water and makes it go stale faster.

**The fix:** move the jar out of direct sun, change the water more often, and scrub the glass each time. If you have started feeding, feed more sparingly — algae eats the same minerals your plant does.

## Reading the roots

The clear jar is your best diagnostic tool — problems show up in the roots long before the leaves complain.



### Healthy

- Pale cream, white, or light tan
- Firm when you touch them
- Slightly see-through, sometimes with fine root hairs
- No smell



### Needs help

- Dark brown to black
- Soft, slimy, or mushy — comes apart when touched
- The outer skin slides off the core
- Sour or rotten smell

## IF ROOTS LOOK BAD

Take the plant out, rinse the roots, and trim away only the soft, dark, mushy parts with clean scissors — leave every firm root alone. Scrub the jar, rinse the stones, refill with fresh water, and move the jar out of direct sun. Then leave it be. A little browning with age is normal: **softness and smell** are the real warning signs, not color alone.

## SECTION FIVE

# Nutrition and continued growth

The difference between a plant that survives and one that grows.

A rooted cutting lives in plain water for a long time on what it has already stored. But plain water holds almost none of the minerals a plant needs to *build* new tissue, so sooner or later growth quietly stops. If your jar has held the same handsome, unchanging plant for months, that is usually why. **Surviving is free. Growing costs minerals.**

## Choosing something to feed it

- **Pick a product labeled for hydroponic or water-grown plants**, or a houseplant fertilizer that says it may be used in water culture.
- **Follow that product's label.** It is the only dosing instruction that applies to the bottle in your hand — concentrations vary enormously between brands.
- **Start at the mild end** of any range the label gives. You can add more next time; you cannot un-burn a root.
- **Mix it into the water first — never onto the roots.** Make up the fresh water in a separate jug, stir, then fill the jar. Concentrate poured straight onto submerged roots scorches them.
- **Feed at water changes**, not on top of old water, so minerals never stack up.

### THIS GUIDE DOES NOT GIVE YOU A DOSE — ON PURPOSE

There is no universal amount — a safe quantity of one product is an overdose of another. Any guide that hands you one teaspoon figure for every bottle on the shelf is guessing. **Read your product's label and follow it.**

## Why “more” does not mean “faster”

Roots absorb minerals dissolved in water, and only so much at a time. Push the concentration too high and the water outside the root becomes saltier than the sap inside it — so water moves *out* of the root instead of in, and the plant dehydrates while sitting in liquid. That is fertilizer burn. Extra minerals also feed algae and crust the glass. **Mild and regular beats strong and occasional, every time.**

### WHEN TO EASE OFF

- **Newly brought home or just moved** — do not feed yet; let it settle for a few weeks.
- **Bright light, pushing new leaves** — growing season. Feed mild, at water changes.
- **Dim spot, or slowed for winter** — feed less often, or pause. A plant that is not growing cannot use the minerals, so they accumulate.
- **Burned tips or crust appearing** — stop, and wait for healthy new growth.

### SIGNS OF OVERFEEDING

- Brown, dry, burned-looking leaf tips
- White crust on glass, stones, or roots
- A sudden algae bloom after you began feeding
- Roots browning and softening for no other reason

**What to do:** stop feeding, change the water, rinse roots and jar, and go back to plain water for a few weeks.

## SECTION SIX

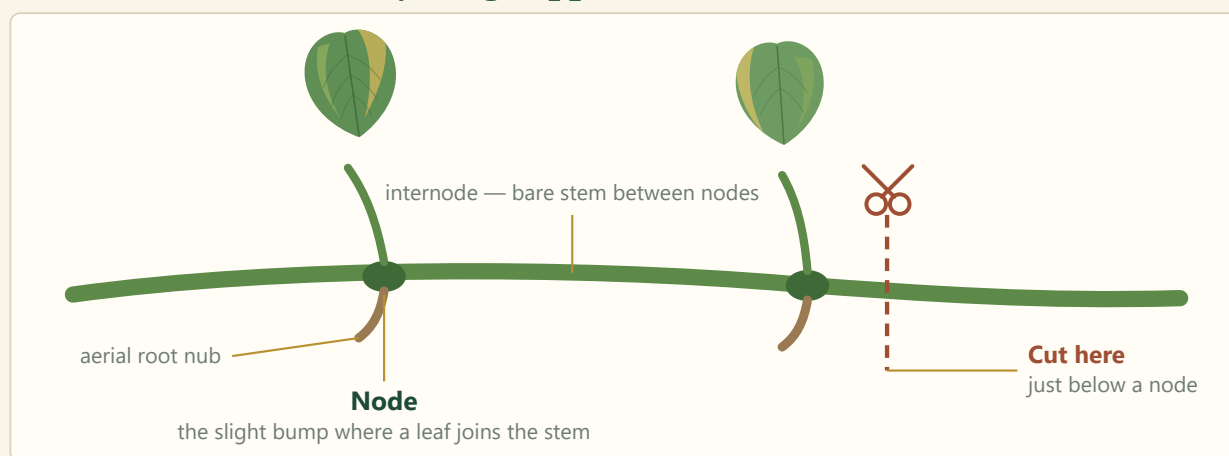
# Making your plant fuller

The counterintuitive part: cutting it back is what makes it bushy.

Golden Pothos is a **vine**. In the wild it scrambles along the forest floor and climbs tree trunks, and its instinct is to send one stem as far as it can rather than fill out where it stands. Left alone in a jar, that instinct produces a long, thin, increasingly bare trailer.

Pruning interrupts that. When you shorten a vine, the plant activates dormant buds further back along the stem — and instead of one vine, you get two or three. Do it a few times and the plant thickens up.

## Find the node — everything happens there



## Four ways to build fullness

### 1 · SHORTEN THE LONGEST VINE

Pick the longest, barest trailer and cut it back with clean scissors, just below a node. New shoots usually break from the nodes behind the cut within a few weeks.

### 2 · PUT THE CUTTING BACK IN THE JAR

Do not throw the piece away. Root it in water (page 12), then tuck it back into the same jar. Several stems in one vessel is the fastest route to a full, lush look.

### 3 · KEEP TURNING THE JAR

A quarter turn each week stops all the growth from crowding onto the window side. Even light means even fullness.

### 4 · GIVE IT SOMETHING TO CLIMB

Golden Pothos produces its biggest leaves when it climbs rather than trails. A small moss pole, trellis, or a few wall hooks will do it — leaves get noticeably larger with support and good light.

### DO NOT OVERCROWD THE JAR

There is a limit. When roots fill the jar so tightly that water barely circulates, the inner roots suffocate and rot, and the whole jar sours faster. If the roots have become a solid mass, it is time to either move some stems into a second jar, size up to a larger vessel, or pot one of them into soil (page 13).

## SECTION SEVEN · PART ONE

# Troubleshooting

Find what you are looking at, then start with the first fix.

Work down the “what to do first” column and change **one thing** at a time. If you change light, water, feeding and location all at once, you will never know which one mattered.

| WHAT YOU SEE                      | LIKELY CAUSES                                                                                               | WHAT TO DO FIRST                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Yellow leaves</b>              | Natural aging of an old leaf; stale water; too little light; no nutrients for a long time; roots in trouble | If it is one older leaf low on the vine, remove it and carry on. If several yellow at once, change the water and check the roots.         |
| <b>Brown or crispy tips</b>       | Very dry air; a heat vent or draft; mineral or fertilizer buildup; water left too low                       | Move it away from vents and radiators. Change the water, rinse the roots, and pause feeding for a few weeks.                              |
| <b>Pale or bleached leaves</b>    | Direct sun scorching the foliage                                                                            | Move it a few feet back from the window or add a sheer curtain. Damaged patches will not turn green again — new leaves come in correctly. |
| <b>Drooping leaves</b>            | Roots not fully covered; a recent move; roots damaged or rotting; a cold draft                              | Check the waterline first — it is the most common cause and the easiest fix. Then look at the roots.                                      |
| <b>Soft, dark, or slimy roots</b> | Stagnant water; a leaf decaying in the jar; too warm and too sunny; overfeeding                             | Trim off only the mushy parts with clean scissors, rinse the rest, scrub the jar, refill with fresh water, and move it out of direct sun. |
| <b>Unpleasant water odor</b>      | Bacteria feeding on decaying plant material                                                                 | Change the water today. Remove any submerged leaf or dead root, and rinse the stones and shells.                                          |
| <b>Green algae or film</b>        | Light plus nutrients in the water — clear glass in a bright spot is ideal for algae                         | Move out of direct sun, change the water, and scrub the glass at every change. Feed more sparingly.                                       |

## ONE YELLOW LEAF IS NOT A CRISIS

Plants retire old leaves. The lowest, oldest leaf on a vine turning yellow while everything above it stays firm and green is normal housekeeping — the plant is pulling resources out of a leaf it no longer needs. Pinch it off and move on. Worry when *several* leaves change at once, or when a change comes with soft roots or smelly water.

## SECTION SEVEN · PART TWO

# Troubleshooting, continued

Growth, color, and the glass itself.

| WHAT YOU SEE                                   | LIKELY CAUSES                                                                                    | WHAT TO DO FIRST                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Long gaps between leaves</b>                | Not enough light — the vine is stretching toward the nearest source                              | Move it closer to a bright window or add a grow light. Prune the leggy stretch and root the cutting to fill the jar back in.            |
| <b>Loss of golden variegation</b>              | Too little light. In dim conditions the plant makes more chlorophyll and the pale markings fade. | Give it brighter indirect light. Older leaves will not change back, but new ones should return to a better pattern.                     |
| <b>No new growth</b>                           | No nutrients in plain water; low light; winter slowdown; roots overcrowded; recently moved       | Check light first, then consider feeding (page 8). In winter, a pause is normal and not a problem to solve.                             |
| <b>Leaves falling off</b>                      | A sudden change in temperature or location; a cold draft; roots failing; the plant has been dry  | Look at the roots and the waterline. Move it away from doorways, vents, and cold windows, then leave it in one place.                   |
| <b>White crust on the glass</b>                | Dissolved minerals from hard water, or fertilizer residue drying at the waterline                | Wipe or scrub it off at the next water change. If it keeps returning, switch to filtered or distilled water and feed more sparingly.    |
| <b>Blackened or damaged stems</b>              | Rot spreading up from failing roots; a bruise from handling; a stem crushed under the stones     | Cut back to firm, green, healthy tissue with clean scissors. Re-root a healthy tip section and start the good part over in fresh water. |
| <b>Tiny insects, webbing, or sticky leaves</b> | Mealybugs, scale, or spider mites                                                                | Separate it from other houseplants today, then turn to page 16.                                                                         |

## CHANGE ONE THING AT A TIME

Give any single change two to three weeks before judging it. Plants respond on their own schedule, and stacking three fixes at once turns a simple problem into a mystery.

## WHEN IN DOUBT, RESET

Fresh room-temperature water, a clean jar, rinsed roots, bright indirect light, and no fertilizer for a few weeks. That combination fixes a surprising share of jar problems on its own.

## SECTION EIGHT

# Pruning and propagation

Making new plants — the easiest magic trick in gardening.

Propagation means growing a new plant from a piece of an old one. Golden Pothos is one of the simplest plants to propagate, and it costs nothing to try — this is exactly how the plant in your jar was made.

## READ THIS FIRST: A LEAF ALONE WILL NOT BECOME A PLANT

A single leaf pulled off the vine has no **node**, and the node is where the buds live. A lone leaf can sit in water for months and even push out a root, yet it will never grow a stem or another leaf. **Every cutting must include a node.**

### Taking a cutting, step by step

- 1 **Choose a healthy vine** — firm stem, good leaves, no yellowing or blackened patches.
- 2 **Clean your scissors.** Wash and dry the blades, or wipe them with rubbing alcohol, so the cut heals fast and carries nothing with it.
- 3 **Count back 4–6 inches from the tip** and find a node — the bump where a leaf joins the stem.
- 4 **Cut about a quarter inch below that node.** The cutting should carry at least one node and two to four leaves.
- 5 **Strip any leaf that would sit underwater**, or it will rot and spoil the water.
- 6 **Stand it in room-temperature water**, node covered and every leaf above the surface. A small glass is perfect.
- 7 **Give it bright, indirect light** and change the water every few days to once a week.
- 8 **Watch the node.** White bumps appear first, then roots — two to six weeks is typical.



### ONCE IT HAS ROOTS

At 2–4 inches of root you have a real plant. **Tuck it back into the original jar** to fill out the display, **start a jar of its own**, or **pot it into soil** (page 13).

### IF A CUTTING TURNS BLACK OR MUSHY

It has rotted and will not recover — throw it out. The usual causes are a leaf left underwater, dirty scissors, or water that was never changed. Take a fresh cutting with clean tools. A failed cutting costs nothing but a few weeks.

## SECTION NINE · PART ONE

# Moving to potting soil

Entirely optional — and worth doing properly if you choose to.

## YOU DO NOT HAVE TO DO THIS

A Golden Pothos can live in water indefinitely given clean water, decent light, and nutrients. People move theirs to soil because they want a larger plant or a climbing vine — not because the jar is failing. If you love the jar, keep the jar.

## When to transfer

- **When the plant is healthy and actively growing** — a transfer asks a lot of a plant.
- **When roots are established but still manageable** — a few inches long, not a dense mass that cannot be untangled without breaking.
- **Not** when it is newly bought, freshly moved, drooping, damaged, or showing rot. Fix the problem first, transfer later.
- **Spring and early summer are easiest**, though a healthy indoor plant can be moved any time of year.

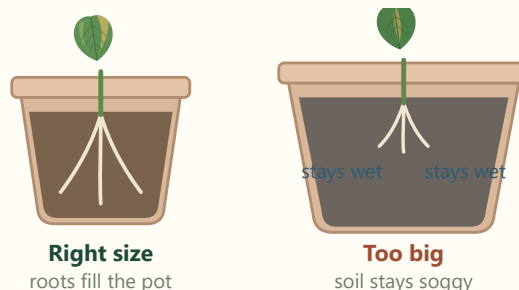
## What you will need

- ☐ A small pot **with drainage holes**
- ☐ A saucer to catch the drips
- ☐ Fresh indoor potting mix
- ☐ Perlite, if the mix needs opening up
- ☐ Clean scissors
- ☐ Room-temperature water

## Choosing the pot

Pick a pot only **slightly larger than the root system** — about an inch of space around the roots. **Drainage holes are not optional.**

Giving a small plant a big pot feels generous but works against you: a large pot holds far more soil than small roots can drink, so the extra stays wet for days. Roots need air as well as water, and soil that never dries is how root rot starts.



## Choosing the potting mix

Use a **loose, well-draining indoor houseplant mix** — a good general-purpose indoor potting mix with a few handfuls of perlite stirred through it is ideal, because the perlite keeps air pockets open. Do **not** use heavy garden soil from outdoors: it compacts in a pot, holds water like a sponge, and can bring pests indoors.

## WATER IS NOT THE SAME AS WET SOIL

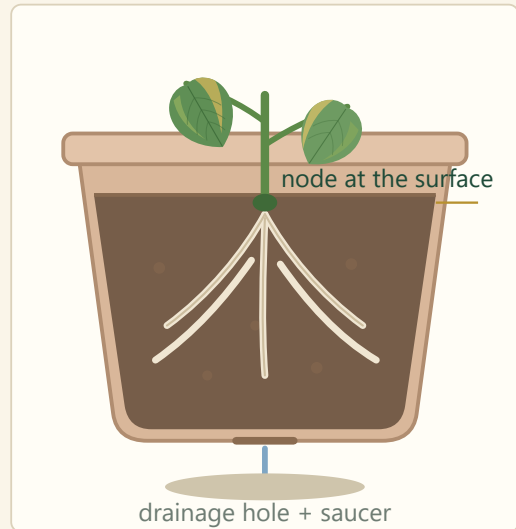
Water-grown roots are adapted to water, which still carries dissolved oxygen. In soil, roots rely on the **air pockets between soil particles**. Waterlogged soil fills those pockets, roots cannot breathe, and decay follows — which is why a plant thriving in a jar can still drown in soggy soil.

## SECTION NINE · PART TWO

# The transfer, step by step

Twenty minutes, start to finish. Read it through once before you begin.

- 1 **Moisten the potting mix first.** Stir water through it in a bowl until it is damp but not dripping — bone-dry mix pulls moisture away from tender roots.
- 2 **Lift the plant out of the jar,** holding the stem low and supporting the roots with your other hand.
- 3 **Remove the stones and shells gently.** Work them loose rather than pulling the plant free. If a root has grown around a stone, leave that stone in place instead of snapping the root.
- 4 **Rinse the roots if they need it,** then look them over in good light.
- 5 **Trim only damaged tissue** — soft, black, or rotting roots — with clean scissors. Leave every firm, pale root alone.
- 6 **Add a layer of moist mix** to the bottom of the pot, deep enough that the roots will sit at a natural height.
- 7 **Make a planting hole** wide enough for the roots to spread into without bending.
- 8 **Position the roots naturally.** Do not fold, crush, coil, or force them. Let them fan out the way they grew.
- 9 **Set the depth:** leaves and leaf stems stay above the soil, and the rooted node sits at or just below the surface.
- 10 **Fill in around the roots gently.** Firm the mix just enough to hold the plant upright — do not pack it down hard.
- 11 **Water thoroughly** until water runs from the drainage holes, which settles the mix around the roots.
- 12 **Empty the saucer.** Never leave the pot standing in collected water.
- 13 **Return it to bright, indirect light** — the same kind of spot the jar enjoyed.



## BEFORE YOU START

Work over a tray or newspaper, keep the roots damp while they are out of water, and do the whole thing in one sitting. Roots dislike sitting exposed to dry air.

## EXPECT A SHORT SULK

Water roots and soil roots do slightly different jobs, and your plant needs a few weeks to grow the second kind. Mild drooping or one yellow leaf during that stretch is normal. Keep conditions steady and let it adjust.

## SECTION NINE · PART THREE

# Aftercare: the first six weeks

The transfer is the easy part. This is where plants are won or lost.

Your plant's roots grew up underwater, surrounded by constant moisture. Soil is a different world, and the first few weeks are a genuine adjustment. Steady beats clever here.

## WATERING THROUGH THE TRANSITION

- **Keep the mix lightly and consistently moist** for the first few weeks — closer to a wrung-out sponge than a swamp.
- **Never waterlogged.** Saturated soil is the single most common way a healthy water-grown plant is lost.
- **Check with your finger, not the calendar.** Push a fingertip an inch into the mix. Damp means wait; barely damp means water.
- **Once new growth appears,** start letting the top inch dry out more between waterings. That is the plant telling you it has settled in.

### NORMAL DURING ADJUSTMENT

- Mild drooping for a few days
- One older leaf turning yellow
- No new growth for several weeks

## THE OTHER FOUR RULES

- **Do not fertilize yet.** Wait until the plant is clearly established and pushing healthy new leaves. Fresh potting mix already carries some nutrients.
- **Do not move it around.** Pick a good bright, indirect spot and leave it there.
- **Do not repot again** because it looks unhappy. Give it time.
- **Do not shuttle it back and forth** between water and soil. Each move costs the plant roots it has just built. Choose one and commit.

### CHECK THE ROOTS IF YOU SEE

- Severe or worsening wilting
- Persistent drooping in damp soil
- A sour smell from the pot
- Stems turning black at the base

## Soil Transfer Checklist

[SAVE OR PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

- ☐ Plant is healthy and actively growing
- ☐ Roots established but not a solid mass
- ☐ Small pot **with drainage holes** + saucer
- ☐ Loose indoor potting mix (perlite if needed)
- ☐ Clean scissors and room-temperature water

### DURING AND AFTER

- ☐ Mix moistened before planting
- ☐ Only damaged roots trimmed away
- ☐ Roots fanned out, not folded or crushed
- ☐ Node at the surface, leaves above the soil
- ☐ Watered through; saucer emptied
- ☐ Bright indirect light; no fertilizer yet

## SECTION TEN

# Pests

Golden Pothos is not a pest magnet — but three visitors turn up often enough to know.

Indoors, most jars sail through life untroubled. Problems usually arrive on a *new* plant brought into the house, which is why a quick look at the undersides of leaves and around the nodes is worth two minutes a month.

| PEST                | WHAT YOU MAY SEE                                                                                                                  | WHAT TO DO                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mealybugs</b>    | Small white cottony tufts tucked into leaf joints, around nodes, and where leaf stems meet the vine. Leaves may turn sticky.      | Dab each one off with a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol, then check again weekly — they hide well and come back.       |
| <b>Scale</b>        | Small brown or tan bumps stuck along stems and leaf undersides. They look like part of the plant and do not move.                 | Scrape them off gently with a fingernail or soft cloth. Persistent infestations may need an appropriate labeled insecticide. |
| <b>Spider mites</b> | Fine speckling or stippling on leaves, then delicate webbing between leaves and stems. The mites themselves are nearly invisible. | Rinse the foliage with plain water and repeat every few days; mites dislike moisture. Wipe leaves clean between rinses.      |

## How to handle any of them

- **Look in the right places.** Turn leaves over and inspect the nodes and leaf joints — that is where pests shelter, not on the open upper surface.
- **Separate the plant immediately.** Move it to another room, away from every other houseplant, before you treat anything. Pests travel.
- **Protect the water or the soil.** If you spray anything, take the plant to a sink first. Do not let treatment products drip into the jar water or soak into the potting mix, where roots absorb them.
- **Read the label of anything you use,** and follow it exactly — including which plants it may be used on, how often, and whether it is safe indoors.
- **Never mix two pest products together.** Combining them can damage the plant and is genuinely unsafe for you.
- **Repeat treatments.** Most pests hatch in waves, so one round rarely finishes the job. Plan on several rounds spaced a week apart.

### THE CHEAPEST CURE

Quarantine every new houseplant for two to three weeks before it joins your others, and look it over before you buy. Almost every indoor pest outbreak walks through the front door on a new plant.

## SECTION ELEVEN • PLEASE READ

# Child and pet safety

Beautiful on the shelf. Not for eating.

## GOLDEN POTHOS SHOULD NOT BE EATEN

Every part of a Golden Pothos contains **insoluble calcium oxalate crystals**. When plant tissue is chewed, those needle-shaped crystals are released and irritate the mouth and throat. The ASPCA lists this plant as toxic to dogs and cats.

This is a plant to keep out of reach — not a plant to be afraid of. Handled sensibly, it is a perfectly ordinary houseplant.

### EVERYDAY PRECAUTIONS

- **Keep the jar out of reach** of children, cats, dogs, rabbits, and any other animal in the house. A high shelf or a hanging spot works well; cats in particular are climbers, so “high” is not automatically “safe.”
- **Wash your hands after pruning** or handling cut stems, and before touching your eyes or face.
- **Consider gloves** if your skin is sensitive — the sap can irritate on contact for some people.
- **Sweep up trimmings straight away.** A dropped leaf on the floor is the most likely thing a pet will find.

### POSSIBLE SYMPTOMS IF CHEWED OR SWALLOWED

- Immediate mouth pain, burning, or irritation of the mouth, tongue and lips
- Excessive drooling
- Vomiting
- Swelling around the mouth
- Difficulty swallowing

Signs listed by the ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center for pothos ingestion in dogs and cats. People can experience similar mouth and throat irritation.

## If someone eats part of the plant

#### FOR PEOPLE

**1-800-222-1222**

Poison Control (US), free and confidential, 24 hours. Or use the online tool at [poison.org](https://poison.org).

#### FOR PETS

**(888) 426-4435**

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center, 24 hours. A consultation fee may apply. Your own veterinarian is also a good first call.

#### EMERGENCY

**Call 911**

**Trouble breathing or trouble swallowing is an emergency.** Do not wait to see whether it passes.

### USEFUL TO HAVE READY

If you call about a person or an animal, it helps to know the plant's name — **Golden Pothos, *Epipremnum aureum*** — roughly how much was eaten, and when. Take the plant or a photo of it with you to a clinic if you go.

This page is general information for houseplant owners, not medical or veterinary advice. If you are worried about a person or an animal, contact a poison center, a doctor, or a veterinarian.

## SECTION TWELVE

# Ten things about your plant

Small talk for when a guest asks what it is.

## 1 · IT HAS A PROPER NAME

Golden Pothos is ***Epipremnum aureum***, a member of the arum family, *Araceae* — the same family as peace lilies, philodendrons, and calla lilies.

## 2 · THE NAME MEANS WHAT YOU WOULD HOPE

The species name *aureum* means **golden**. The genus comes from the Greek *epi* ("upon") and *premon* ("a trunk") — a plant that grows upon tree trunks.

## 3 · IT COMES FROM THE SOUTH PACIFIC

It is native to islands of the **South Pacific** — sources differ on exactly which, and Missouri Botanical Garden's entry names both the Society Islands and the Solomon Islands. It has since naturalized across many tropical regions.

## 4 · IT IS A CLIMBER, NOT A HANGER

In the wild it climbs tree trunks using **aerial roots** — those little brown nubs at each node are the beginnings of them. Trailing from a shelf is our idea, not the plant's.

## 5 · ITS LEAVES CHANGE SHAPE AS IT CLIMBS

Indoors you see **juvenile** leaves: small, whole, heart-shaped. Given a support and good light, a mature plant produces dramatically larger leaves that develop splits and holes.

## 6 · WILD LEAVES GET ENORMOUS

Clemson's extension service notes that in nature pothos leaves can reach **up to three feet long**, with holes along the middle. As houseplants they usually stay a few inches and remain whole.

## 7 · "DEVIL'S IVY" IS A COMPLIMENT

The nickname comes from how hard it is to kill and how stubbornly it stays green, even in poor light. It also answers to Taro Vine, Ivy Arum, and Marble Queen.

## 8 · DIM LIGHT COSTS YOU THE GOLD

In low light the plant produces more chlorophyll to catch what light there is, so variegated types **lose some of their marbling** and new leaves come in plainer green.

## 9 · IT ALMOST NEVER FLOWERS INDOORS

Golden Pothos is famously "shy-flowering." Researchers traced this to a **deficiency in gibberellin**, a plant hormone; treating plants with it induced flowering. Your plant will almost certainly never bloom, and that is completely normal.

## 10 · ABOUT "AIR-PURIFYING PLANTS"

You will see this claim everywhere. It traces back to sealed-chamber experiments. A 2020 review of decades of that research concluded that **ordinary ventilation clears indoor air far faster than potted plants can** — so enjoy yours for the way it looks, not as an air filter.

Sources for the claims on this page are listed at the back of the guide.

## SECTION THIRTEEN

# Monthly care checklist

Keep it open on your phone, or print this one page. Ten small checks, once a month.

- |                                                                                    |                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Waterline</b> — roots covered, leaves dry              | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Jar rotated</b> — a quarter turn for even growth     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Water clarity</b> — clear, no film, no smell           | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>New growth</b> — any new leaves since last month?    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Root health</b> — pale and firm, not soft or dark      | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Jar cleaned</b> — glass, stones, and shells rinsed   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Leaves cleaned</b> — dust wiped with a soft damp cloth | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Nutrients</b> — fed per the product label, or paused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Pest check</b> — leaf undersides and nodes             | <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Photo taken</b> — same spot, same angle              |



## Your plant's story

Fill these in as they happen. In a year this will be the most charming page in the guide.

**Date received** .....

**Favorite location** .....

**First new leaf** .....

**Soil-transfer date** .....

**Longest vine** .....

**Number of cuttings taken** .....

**Notes**

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

### A MONTH IS NOT A DEADLINE

If you miss a month, nothing terrible happens. Golden Pothos is forgiving by nature — this checklist exists to make care easy to remember, not to add another chore to your week.

## SECTION FOURTEEN

# Stay in touch

No pressure, and no flood of email — just a note when something good is ready.

Thank you for giving one of my plants a home. Every jar is put together by hand, and I genuinely like hearing how they get on.

## Join the list

Subscribers hear first about:

- **New artwork** — originals are one of a kind, so the list sees them before anyone else
- **New coloring books**, and whatever I'm making next
- **Subscriber-only sales** and seasonal specials
- **Free mandala pages** now and then, before they go on the site
- **Commission slots** when they open — there are only ever a few
- **Local plant drops**, which usually go the same day

### SIGN UP

**Sign up:** [BrookeElaine.com](https://BrookeElaine.com)

**Questions:** use the contact form on the site

**Find me:** links are on the site

### SCAN TO SEE WHAT ELSE I MAKE



**BrookeElaine.com**

Art, coloring books, plants, and whatever I'm making next.

### SHOW ME A ONE-MONTH PHOTO

Remember that first-day photo? Take another after a month and send them side by side. I love seeing them, and it tells me my plants are settling in well.

### A NOTE ON PHOTOS

Customer photos are only ever shared publicly with permission. If I would like to use yours on my shop or social media, I will ask you first — and “no” is a perfectly fine answer that changes nothing.

Questions about your plant are always welcome. If something looks wrong and the troubleshooting pages have not solved it, send a photo of the whole jar plus a close-up of the roots — that is usually all it takes to work out what is going on.

## SECTION FIFTEEN

## Where this information comes from

The care in this guide is drawn from university extension services, botanical gardens, and recognized poison-control organizations — listed here so you can check any of it yourself.

### ASPCA — Toxic and Non-Toxic Plants: Golden Pothos

Toxicity to dogs and cats, toxic principle, and clinical signs.

[aspca.org/pet-care/aspca-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants/golden-pothos](https://aspca.org/pet-care/aspca-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants/golden-pothos)

### North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox — *Epipremnum aureum*

Light, watering, aerial roots, climbing habit, mature leaf development.

[plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/epipremnum-aureum/](https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/plants/epipremnum-aureum/)

### Clemson Cooperative Extension, Home & Garden Information Center — How to Grow Pothos Indoors

Variegation in low light, node requirement for cuttings, root rot, pests, wild leaf size, toxicity.

[hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/how-to-grow-pothos-indoors-epipremnum-spp-care-cultivars-and-common-problems/](https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/how-to-grow-pothos-indoors-epipremnum-spp-care-cultivars-and-common-problems/)

### Missouri Botanical Garden — Plant Finder: *Epipremnum aureum*

Origin, meaning of the botanical name, and common problems.

[plantfinder.mobot.org/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b594](https://plantfinder.mobot.org/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=b594)

### Clemson Cooperative Extension — Common Houseplant Insects & Related Pests

Identification and treatment of mealybugs, scale, and spider mites.

[hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/common-houseplant-insects-related-pests/](https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/common-houseplant-insects-related-pests/)

### National Capital Poison Center (Poison Control)

Plants containing calcium oxalate crystals. Helpline 1-800-222-1222; webPOISONCONTROL online tool.

[poison.org](https://poison.org)

### Cummings, B. E. & Waring, M. S. (2020), *Journal of Exposure Science & Environmental Epidemiology*

"Potted plants do not improve indoor air quality." The basis for the caution about air-purifying claims.

[nature.com/articles/s41370-019-0175-9](https://nature.com/articles/s41370-019-0175-9)

### Hung, C.-Y. et al. (2016), *Scientific Reports*

"Gibberellin deficiency is responsible for shy-flowering nature of *Epipremnum aureum*."

[nature.com/articles/srep28598](https://nature.com/articles/srep28598)

#### EDUCATIONAL DISCLAIMER

This guide is provided for general educational purposes only. It is not medical, veterinary, or professional horticultural advice.

Growing conditions vary from home to home, and no guide can promise a particular result. Always follow the label on any fertilizer or pest-control product you use, and contact a poison center, doctor, or veterinarian if you are concerned about a person or an animal. All illustrations are original artwork created for this guide.



Thank you for growing with me.

[BrookeElaine.com](https://BrookeElaine.com)