

Aglaonema modestum Chinese Evergreen¹

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Introduction

Easily grown, the attractive plants eventually form substantial clumps of green stems with 10 to 14-inch-long, shiny, deep green leaves (Figure 1). This lends a tropical characteristic to any shaded area planted with Chinese Evergreen. The plant requires shade making it well-suited to low light conditions for house plants or sheltered, outdoor northern exposures. Temperatures below 45°F can injure the foliage.

General Information

Scientific name: *Aglaonema modestum*

Pronunciation: ag-lay-o-NEE-muh mo-DESS-tum

Common name(s): Chinese Evergreen

Family: *Araceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: mass planting; container or above-ground planter; ground cover; suitable for growing indoors

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 2 to 4 feet

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: slow

Texture: medium



Figure 1. Chinese Evergreen.

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: spiral

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: undulate

Leaf shape: ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green
Flower characteristic: summer flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval
Fruit length: 1 to 3 inches
Fruit cover: fleshy
Fruit color: red
Fruit characteristic: showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: very thick

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade
Soil tolerances: clay; sand; acidic; loam
Drought tolerance:
Soil salt tolerance: poor
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

Any fertile, nematode-free soil or artificial media is suitable for growth, yet *Aglaonemas* will survive in peat and perlite, in sand, or can be grown hydroponically. They enjoy moist soil which is allowed to dry slightly before watering. Be careful not to overwater but do not let the soil dry for more than a few days. *Aglaonemas* require shade since direct sun will turn leaves yellow. They perform admirably in conditions too dark for most other tropicals. They will succeed in low light, either as house plants or in sheltered locations on the north side of buildings, or under heavy shade of trees. They are attractive planted as single specimens, or in mass to create a tropical, coarse-textured effect. Plant on two- to three-foot centers. Temperatures below 45°F. can injure the foliage. Overwatering causes root rot and yellowing of the leaves.

Propagation is by cuttings.

Soil-borne nematodes and mites can be a problem for Chinese Evergreen.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Roots can rot if the soil is kept too wet.