Aglaonema modestum Chinese Evergreen¹

Edward F. Gilman²

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

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description
Height: 1 to 3 feet
Spread: 2 to 4 feet


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Plant habit: upright
Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: slow
Texture: medium

**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
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

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**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 tropicaals. 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.