

***Aglaonema* spp.: Chinese Evergreen, *Aglaonema*¹**

Keighly Graves, Wendy Wilber, Tom A. Wichman, Claire Lewis, Gail Hansen, and Ryan Klein²

This document is part of a series originally authored by Edward F. Gilman.

Introduction

Aglaonema, commonly known as Chinese evergreen, is a genus of 26 species native to the Asia-Pacific region, along with many cultivar selections. Chinese evergreen is an herbaceous perennial with an upright growth habit. This plant can reach a height and spread of 1 to 3 feet, depending upon species and cultivar selection. This plant is commonly grown for its ornamental foliage, which is glabrous and may be variegated with different patterns and colors including green, yellow, white, pink, red, or gray depending upon cultivar selection (Figure 1, Table 1). The evergreen foliage ranges from 8 to 12 inches long (Figure 2). It produces flowers that are borne on a spadix and protected by a spathe (Figure 3). These flowers are yellowish-green and generally considered inconspicuous compared to the foliage. Red fleshy berries may be produced on a stalk and are considered showy (Figure 4); however, this occurrence may be rare depending on lighting conditions. This plant lends a tropical feel to the landscape and is well suited for mass plantings, groundcover, container or above-ground planters, or as a great houseplant.

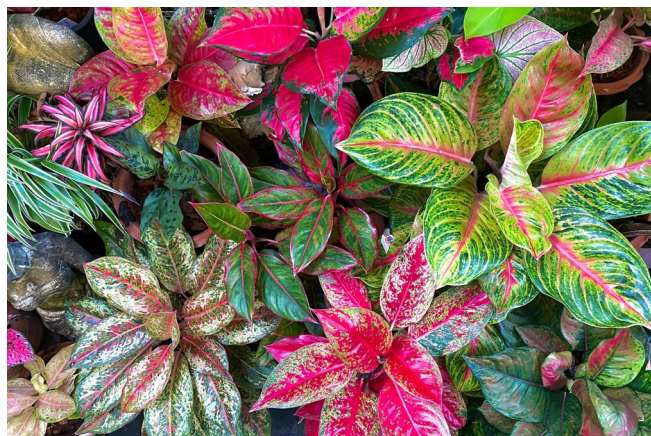


Figure 2. Full form—*Aglaonema* spp.: Chinese evergreen.
Credit: Kittiwut via Adobe Stock

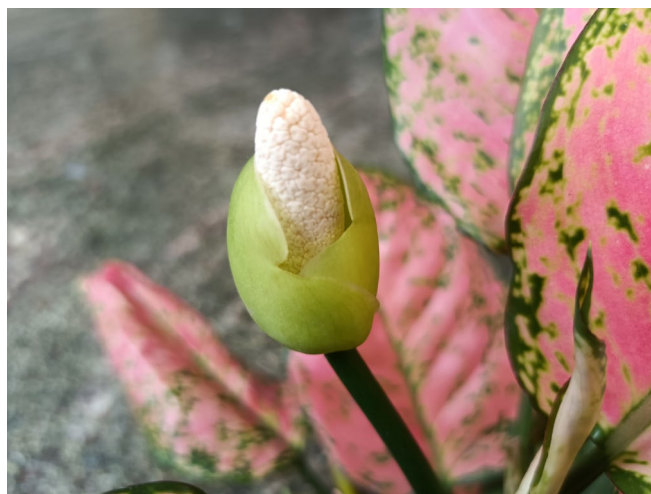


Figure 3. Flower—*Aglaonema* spp.: Chinese evergreen.
Credit: kpsathydev via Adobe Stock



Figure 1. Leaf—*Aglaonema* spp.: Chinese evergreen with variegated pink and green foliage.
Credit: jobi_pro via Adobe Stock



Figure 4. Fruit—*Aglaonema* spp.: Chinese evergreen
Credit: © Donna Schakelaar, some rights reserved (CC-BY-NC) via iNaturalist

General Information

Scientific name: *Aglaonema* spp.

Pronunciation: ag-lay-o-NEE-ma species

Common name(s): Chinese evergreen, *Aglaonema*

Family: *Araceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11B (Figure 5 and 6)

USDA Hardiness Zones 10B-11A

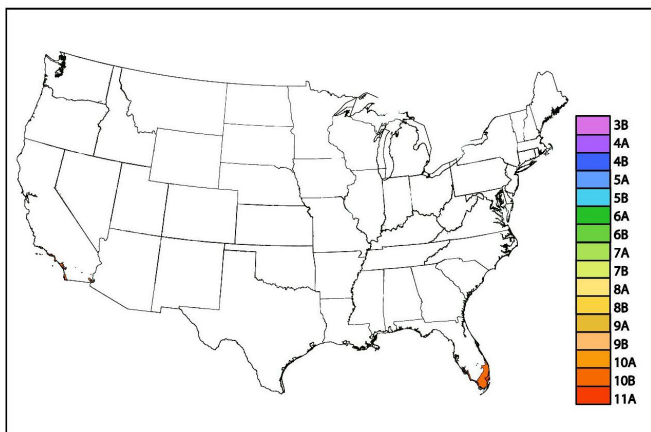


Figure 5. Shaded area represents potential planting zone—USDA Hardiness Zones 10B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

USDA Hardiness Zones 10B-11A

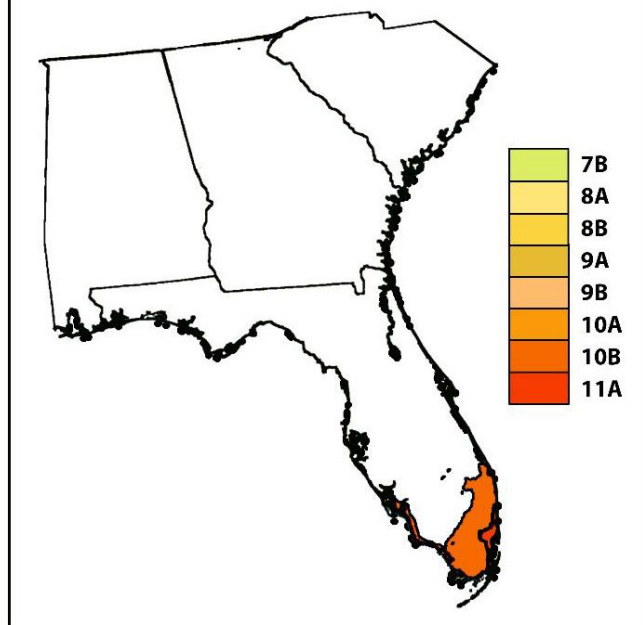


Figure 6. Shaded area represents potential planting zone in the southeast region—USDA Hardiness Zones 10B–11A; 11B within planting zone but not pictured on map.

Credit: This map is based on the 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map. Visit <https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/> for specific zone information.

Planting month for zones 10 and 11: year-round

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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

Availability: generally available in many areas within its hardiness range

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet

Spread: 1 to 3 feet

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; showy

Leaf blade length: 8 to 12 inches

Leaf color: dark green; light green; silver; white; pink; red; yellow; gray; dependent upon cultivar selection (Table 1)

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: green spathe; white spadix

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: acidic; clay; sand; loam

Drought tolerance: low

Soil salt tolerance: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: showy evergreen leaves add winter interest

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Toxicity: this plant exhibits low toxicity; all parts of the plant may cause dermatitis or internal issues if ingested; toxic principle is calcium oxalate crystals; use caution around pets

Use and Management

Chinese evergreen, unlike many other tropical plants, thrives in full-shade locations and will experience leaf scorch if located in too sunny of a location. As it is a tropical plant, temperatures below 45°F can injure the foliage. It will tolerate any fertile, nematode-free soil or artificial media including peat, perlite, sand, clay, loam, or can be grown hydroponically. This plant needs moist soil, which is allowed to dry slightly for a few days before watering. Avoid overwatering this plant as it will lead to root rot and leaf yellowing. Chinese evergreen should be placed in low light, either as a house plant, in sheltered locations on the north side of buildings, or under heavy shade of trees.

Chinese evergreen plants are attractive when planted as single specimens, or in mass to create a tropical, coarse-textured effect. When planting in mass, space plants on 2- to 3-foot centers. Many species and cultivars of this plant are available, displaying a variety of colors and variegation on the foliage (Table 1). Chinese evergreen may be grown outside USDA hardiness 10B–11 if protected from frost or grown as a houseplant. Green and silver forms of this plant perform well as houseplants and in low-light settings. High color selections will require bright indirect light to retain their color. Propagation is by cuttings.





Design Considerations



The Chinese evergreen's broad leaves and lush, irregular form lend a cool, tropical feel to the landscape. This plant's pointed, rippled leaf margins give it a coarse texture, and with its deep variegation, create a bold statement. For textural contrast, pair it with softer, mounding plants that have small foliage, or with grasses featuring thin, strappy blades and wispy flowers. To enhance the plant's color, dark green varieties are best highlighted by plants with yellow-green, variegated, or burgundy foliage, while more colorful varieties of Chinese evergreen stand out against a backdrop of fine-textured, dark green plants.

Pests and Diseases

Soilborne nematodes and mites can be a problem for Chinese evergreen plants. Roots can rot if the soil is kept too wet. No diseases of major concern.

Table 1. Common Aglaonema species/cultivars and their notable traits.

Species/Cultivar Name	Image	Notable Traits
Aglaonema 'Bold Forest'		Variegated foliage with yellow and dark green coloration
Aglaonema 'Ivory Frost'		Dark green glossy foliage with ivory colored leaf margins
Aglaonema 'Red Valentine'		Variegated foliage with predominantly pink leaves and light green leaf margins produce a striking contrast
Aglaonema 'Ruby Crab'		Variegated foliage with predominantly pink leaves with dark green variegation throughout the leaf

Species/Cultivar Name	Image	Notable Traits
Aglaonema 'Siam Aurora'		Variegated foliage with light green and dark pink leaf margins and venation
Aglaonema 'Silver Bay'		Variegated foliage with gray/white along the leaf center and striated green coloration near the leaf margin
Credits: Aglaonema 'Bold Forest', Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Aglaonema 'Ivory Frost', Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Aglaonema 'Red Valentine', Pavaphon via Adobe Stock; Aglaonema 'Ruby Crab', Photo Courtesy of Proven Winners; Aglaonema 'Siam Aurora', mraoraor via Adobe Stock; Aglaonema 'Silver Bay', Firn via Adobe Stock		

¹ This document is FPS25, one of a series of the Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date October 1999. Revised August 2018 and November 2025. Visit the EDIS website at <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu> for the currently supported version of this publication.

² Keighly Graves, horticultural science specialist, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program; Wendy Wilber, statewide Master Gardener Program coordinator and Extension agent IV; Tom A. Wichman, Extension program manager, Florida-Friendly Landscape Program, UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency; Claire Lewis, state specialized agent II and director Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ Program, UF/IFAS Center for Land Use Efficiency; Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design, Department of Environmental Horticulture; Ryan Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture, Department of Environmental Horticulture; UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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