

Kentia Palm Care Handbook

The palm that forgives a dim corner

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AGreenNest Plant Guide

Howea forsteriana grows wild only on Lord Howe Island, off the east coast of Australia, and has been the benchmark indoor palm since the 1870s. It handles lower light and cooler rooms than most palms, grows slowly from a single trunk that never suckers, and resents being repotted more than it resents being ignored. This handbook covers light, watering rhythm, humidity, brown tips, spider mites and why a kentia should be left alone in its pot for years at a time.

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Kentia Palm - Howea forsteriana

The kentia palm built its reputation in Victorian parlours, where it put up with dim light, draughts and erratic watering better than any other palm on offer. It is slow, single-trunked and long-lived, so buy the size you want and let it settle.

Care at a glance: light: bright indirect light, with a little gentle morning or evening sun; water deeply every ~8 days (far less in winter); a standard peat-free houseplant mix; happiest around 55-85F; propagate by fresh seed sown on the surface; pet-safe.

Quick facts

- Light: bright indirect light, with a little gentle morning or evening sun.
- Water: deeply every ~8 days, far less in winter.
- Temperature: 55-85F (13-29C).
- Humidity: average home humidity is fine.
- Soil: a standard peat-free houseplant mix.
- Propagate: fresh seed sown on the surface.
- Pet: generally safe around pets.

Every kentia palm in the world descends from Lord Howe Island, a small volcanic island off eastern Australia where the species grows wild and nowhere else on earth.

General Care Principles

No matter the species in this handbook, a handful of principles carry most of the weight. Get these right and the individual notes above become fine-tuning.

Match the plant to the light: sun-lovers go in the brightest window or under a grow light; shade-lovers go in east or north light. Wrong light is the single most common cause of failure.

Water on the plant's schedule, not the calendar. Soak thoroughly, then let the soil dry before the next drink. In winter, ease right off - most of these plants want a cool, dry rest.

Use the right soil and a draining pot. Free-draining for succulents, moisture-retentive but aerated for ferns and foliage. A drainage hole is non-negotiable.

Propagate to multiply. Almost every plant here can be cloned from a leaf, offset, division, or cutting - see each species for its best method.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should I really water?

Forget frequent sips. Soak the soil completely, then let it dry out fully before the next drink. In winter most of these plants want a long, dry rest. The lift test (light pot = dry) beats any calendar.

My plant is stretching and pale - what does that mean?

It wants more light. Move it to a brighter window or add a full-spectrum LED grow light. New growth will be compact and colourful; the stretched part will not undo itself, so behead and re-root the top if you like.

What soil should I use?

A free-draining mix is non-negotiable. For succulents that means gritty, sandy soil in a pot with a real drainage hole. For leafy types a peat-free houseplant mix is fine. Sitting in wet soil is the fastest route to rot.

Is this plant safe around my pets?

We note pet safety per species in this guide. 'Pet-safe' means it is not on the usual toxic lists, but no plant is food - keep curious cats and dogs from chewing leaves, and call a vet if you are worried.

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