Native to Eastern South Africa and Swaziland, in the wild this rare, hardy, drought-tolerant xeriscaping succulent plant can be found mostly on slopes and rocky outcrops. It has small round soft green glossy padded leaves with burgundy red stems. It looks similar to the unrelated Jade Plant but it has rounder and smaller pads than the Crassula ovate variety. They can grow up to 20 feet high outside and only 6-8” inside.

It is used indoors as a Jade Bonsai Tree since it has a small root mass and thrives in shallow tray-like pots. It does well in terrariums, hanging baskets and dish gardens. It is also used as wedding favors and in wreaths. It is used in Southern African cuisine, added to salads, soups, and stews to add a sour flavor.

Outdoors, some use this plant as a privacy hedge and it is resistant to fire and also deer. It is the wild elephant’s favorite food. In a single feeding, elephants will eat every bit of the leaves and small branches from large thickets of these plants. However, the plant is so hardy and resilient that within a couple weeks it is lush with new growth. In some areas, the Portulacaria afra makes up 80% of an elephant herd’s diet. It also feeds goats and tortoises.

Portulacaria afra is an incredible “carbon sponge,” absorbing high levels of carbon from the air.

### Name(s)
Portulacaria afra; Dwarf Jade Plant, Miniature Jade, Elephant Bush, Elephant Plant, Elephant’s Food, Porkbush, Spekboom, Yellow Rainbow Bush, Small Leaf Jade

### Origin
Eastern South Africa and Swaziland

### Flowering
Rarely blooms indoors. In the wild, they bloom spring to early summer. Pale pink or lavender star-shaped clustered flowers that rarely bloom but form at the tip of the branches. Some growers find that the dryer it is the more they bloom.

### Poisonous
Non-poisonous

### Temperature
They prefer a room free of drafts.

### Light
These plants thrive with indirect sunlight. Too much bright light can cause the leaves to drop off

### Watering
Water sparingly from April through October. They are dormant in the winter and normally do not need to be watered. Plants in containers may go for months without needing water depending on the conditions. Do not leave water in a tray or saucer.

### Soil
Mix one-half potting soil and a mixture of sand, pumice or vermiculite. The pH requirements are 5.6 to 6.5 acidic to mildly acidic.

### Fertilizer
Fertilize 1-3 times in late winter through early spring with a ½ diluted fertilizer.

### Pruning
It is easy to keep this plant smaller with regular pruning.

### Propagation
Propagate with cuttings a in the spring or summer. The cuttings should completely dry out and then callous for a few days first. Then plant the cutting in gritty damp soil. Keep away from direct sunlight. Water the soil every few days or when it feels dry. After about two weeks or so, you will notice new roots growing. After about four to six weeks, the cuttings should be fully rooted and you will soon notice new growth developing from the top.


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