### Name(s)
Euphorbia tirucalli; Milk Bush Plant; Pencil Cactus Plant; Indian Tree Spurge, Naked Lady Plant, Aveloz, Milk Bush Plant, Sticks on Fire, and Petroleum Plant.

### Origin
Africa and India

### Flowering
New branchlets are green with a short cylindrical shape having a pencil-like thickness, often forming clusters at the branch ends. Cyathia (flower structures) are located at the tops of the branchlets in stalk-less clusters, featuring large petal-like showy bracts which typically hide the inconspicuous tiny yellowish flowers within. Tiny leaves (to 1” long) are oblanceolate.

### Poisonous
Pencil Cactus are very poisonous plants. The stems contain an irritating sap-like substance that oozes out of any cut or break in the stem. Eye contact can cause blindness and ingestion can be fatal. Not only should you wear gloves when working with a Pencil cactus, but you should wash your hands thoroughly with soap after removing the gloves. You don’t want to risk getting sap in your eyes or mouth.

### Temperature
Likes warm temperatures between 65°-70°F (18.3°-21.1°C) during most of the year. In the winter, when resting, a Pencil Cactus prefers cooler temperatures around 50°F (10°C).

### Light
A Pencil Cactus plant requires very bright light and can even handle direct morning sun.

### Watering
During the spring and summer allow the top 50% of the soil to dry out before watering. In the fall & winter water once a month. Pencil Cactus are very drought resistant, so when in doubt, do not water.

### Soil
Use a quick draining succulent or cactus soil to prevent over-watering.

### Fertilizer
Feed at the beginning of spring and the beginning of summer with a balanced 20-20-20 fertilizer at ¼ the recommended strength.

### Repotting
A pencil cactus grows quickly and becomes quite a tall plant. It needs a good size sturdy pot and may need to be re-potted every year or two. Allow the soil in the pot to totally dry out before moving a Pencil Cactus to a new container.

### Humidity
Basic household humidity

### Pruning
Aggressively prune a Pencil cactus to keep it looking full. Always wear gloves and a long sleeved shirt when pruning the plant to prevent the irritating sap from getting on your skin.

### Propagation
Easily propagated using stem cuttings

### Potential Problems
- **Pests:** Mealy Bugs, Spider Mites and Aphids
- **Diseases:** Susceptible to phomopsis which is a fungal disease that causes gray “wart like” growths on the stems and root rot due to over watering.

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Euphorbia tirucalli is not a cactus plant at all but rather a member of the euphorbia family like a Poinsettia. The green succulent stems, which are about the width of a pencil, branch upwards in an almost geometrical pattern. It grows quickly and can reach a height of 10’-15’ outdoors and up to 6’ in an indoor container. Although this is an easy care plant that just needs bright light and a little bit of water to do well, it does have a downside. All parts of these plants are considered poisonous and should be kept away from pets and children.

This unique looking plant, native to Africa and India, is also referred to as Indian Tree Spurge, Naked Lady Plant, Aveloz, Milk Bush Plant, and Petroleum Plant. It is also nicknamed ‘Sticks on Fire’ for a reason. Numerous slender stems, resembling small pencils or sticks, grow from the base, and during the cooler months they glow superbly in vivid shades of pink, orange, and yellow when grown in bright sun. The colors are utterly stunning and make you forget how poisonous it is.

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