



Monstera

Monstera deliciosa Liebm.

Synonym: *Philodendron pertusum* Kunth & Bouche

Common names: monstera, split-leaf philodendron, ceriman, Mexican breadfruit, Swiss-cheese plant, breadfruit vine, hurricane plant, fruit-salad plant, window plant, cut-leaf philodendron.

Native habitat: Tropical America (southern Mexico, Guatemala)

Characteristics

Monstera is a striking, evergreen, broadleaved woody vine that can climb to a great height on support. Its woody stem scrambles over the ground or climbs onto supports, but it can be cut back so new shoots start if it gets out of bounds or becomes “leggy.” When it climbs, long cord-like roots are produced, and these may reach the ground.

Monstera grows vigorously when young. Its large, thick, leathery leaves are glossy dark green when mature, measure 2–3 ft long, and are deeply cut and perforated with oblong holes. The leaf stems can be as long as 3 ft. Leaves of young, juvenile plants are uncut and smaller, and this form is often called *Philodendron pertusum*.

Numerous flowers occur in a spike and, except for a few sterile ones near the base of the spike, the flowers are perfect (containing both male and female parts). The flower spike is surrounded by a white, boat-like bract. The flowers are not showy. Monstera is well known for its long, cone-shaped, edible fruits about 8 x 2 inches in size. The fruits are made up of numerous cohering berries. The mature fruit has a yellow-green, violet-spotted rind of hexagonal plates covering a creamy-white, soft pulp having a flavor like a mixture of banana and pineapple.

Location

Monstera does best in filtered shade and rich soil with ample organic matter. It prefers a constant supply of moisture but does not tolerate waterlogging. It needs irrigation in dry areas. It tolerates low light and low humidity but is very susceptible to injury from soil salinity or wind-borne salt.

Landscape uses

This plant is unsurpassed for creating a tropical atmosphere, either outdoors or in interior landscapes. It is excellent as a single specimen or in mass plantings if ample room is available. It is a striking house plant and does well in containers



with good drainage. Young plants are often grown on moss “totem poles” indoors. It may also be used on a trellis or to cover walls and steep rock-cuts. Monstera makes a good bank cover for shady locations.

Propagation

Increase monstera by rooting sections of the main stem in good propagation media, keeping it moist until started. Terminal stem cuttings may also be used. Tall, leggy plants may be air-layered and repotted.

Additional notes

When fruits are green they contain some calcium oxalate crystals, which are irritating to the mouth and throat. Monstera plants are relatively pest-free.

Cultivars (varieties)

‘Borsigiana’—vining type with smaller, glossy leaves with pinnate lobes widely and evenly separated. The leafstalk is wrinkled where it joins the leaf.

‘Variegata’—(variegated philodendron) has irregular variegation where parts of the leaf may be entirely green and other sections marbled-cream to greenish-yellow, or entirely cream. New growth may revert back to green form.

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