

Collectors Corner Fact Sheet

Lucky Bamboo—*Dracaena sanderiana*



Well known throughout China, this plant is probably the most popular indoor plant in China and the rest of the world. Lucky Bamboo is well regarded in the art of FengShui in which the plant is considered as a symbol of good luck. New businesses are presented with towers of canes up to 1 meter high as gifts of luck for the new venture and the plants will be kept near the entrance of the business to attract good fortune. Chinese New Year is celebrated with the giving of a *Dracaena* as a gift to bring prosperity for the new year. Lucky Bamboo is also attributed to bringing good luck, prosperity, health (Chi), harmony, peace and virtuous (Zen) Relationships.

Lucky Bamboo is not a bamboo but a member of the *Dracaena* family that grows as a single bamboo like stem up to 1 meter tall. When cut the stems produce a single new shoot from each leaf axial and with repeated cutting can produce multiple branches and be kept short.

Position

Sanderiana is a remarkable plant that can tolerate extremely low light and can grow without any direct sunlight in rooms with electrical lighting. *Sanderiana* is a tropical plant so must be kept indoors in colder climates, it will tolerate short periods at low temperatures but will not survive winters outdoors.

Growing Media

Sanderiana is an extremely hardy plant that will grow in any good potting media or permanently in water, this ability has made it extremely popular with many people keeping them for years in jars or vases of water. New cuttings can be placed in water where they will root in a few weeks. When kept in water *Sanderiana* should not be kept in windows in winter if the window gets very cold. In water the roots will be much colder than in potting mix and this can cause damage in the colder months. *Sanderiana* kept in potting media can be treated like any normal indoor plant and can do well in colder or hotter indoor areas without the need for misting or higher humidity. When grown in water the water only needs to be changed if it looks messy, the roots can be washed and cut back if too many are present.

Watering

Sanderiana needs water to grow, when in potting mix the soil should be watered when almost dry, plants in potting media should not be sitting in water as this can cause the media to go stale and hurt the plant. The moisture level in the pot can be tested by pushing a finger into the soil or by feeling the coolness of the pot, if the pot is much cooler than the air temperature the soil is damp or wet. *Sanderiana* can dry out for a few days without any damage except in very hot weather.

Fertilising

Sanderiana requires food to grow, in water there is no fertiliser so some must be added every few weeks over the warmer months, the level will depend on how fast you would like the plant to grow. 1/2 strength fertiliser using any quality brand will be sufficient, for maximum growth replace most of the water with this fertiliser, for minimal growth add maybe 10% of the volume of water in the jar. In potting media a complete water at 1/2 strength monthly will do. Fertilizing will improve growth and produce thicker stronger leaves.

Maintenance

Sanderiana requires very little maintenance, growth is slow, about 15 to 30cm per year, if stems become too tall they can be cut back with a very sharp clean knife,



they must be cut about 1cm above a leaf base as this is where a new shoot will be produced. Older leaves can be removed from the stem to expose the bamboo like cane. Bamboo is available as multiple arrangements where many canes are bundled together to form towers and other arrangements, in these cases some canes will die over a period of time, these should be removed. The dead canes will not damage other canes.

Pests, diseases and problems

Sanderiana does not suffer from many pests or diseases, the only one to watch is spider mite which causes a dusty appearance across the leaf surface and underneath. The most common problem with *sanderiana* is if they are moved from one area or climate to another they suffer from a transitional shock. This can cause damage or the loss of some of the canes. Another problem is long term exposure to the cold, in particular if the plant is kept in water. If cane yellowing occurs in winter it is advised to move the plant away from the source of the cold. *Sanderiana* will turn a pale yellow green and stop growing if they are not fertilized, this however will occur over many months, sudden yellowing is a symptom of some environmental factor that has harmed the plant. Once established in a location the chances of problems are extremely low.

Fun with Bamboo

Sanderiana canes are very versatile and the range of uses is as large as the imagination allows. Canes of bamboo are used nowadays in floral arrangements being reused with new flowers each time, they can be grown with glass beads, small or large stones in the water or be grown in water storage crystals. *Sanderiana* can be made into a wide variety of arrangements or be combined with other material in Ikebana. Probably the most popular arrangement is the curly bamboo, these have taken almost a year to grow in this shape, the method used is the plant is layed down at 30 degrees and rotated 90 degrees every 3 to 4 weeks, it takes 3 to 4 months to create a single curl.

Sanderiana is a remarkable survivor and we often hear stories of how well people have succeeded in growing this wonderful plant. In some instances we have growers with plants reaching the ceiling, we hope you have as much success and can come back and tell us stories of its survival.



Good Growing!
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