

Snake Plant (*Sansevieria trifasciata*) from India, Africa



Considered to be "plain", the use of a colorful pot has made this bird's nest (*Sansevieria 'Hahnii'*) highly decorative. Photo by Randall Prue. Also known as mother-in-law's tongue, and also available in a compact rosette form (shown here) commonly known as bird's nest!

This article is based on the topic (*Sansevieria*) in [Keeping Them Alive](#) , but contains additional "bonus" material not available in 1982. The photo at left is a bird's nest (*Hahnii*) *sansevieria* that I have grown for many years (it was once a tiny thing with only a few leaves in a single rosette). Recently I decided to put the multi-colored decorative cache-pot to use, and the *sansevieria* happened to fit. I find that they go very well together.

Succulent *Sansevieria* is one of the most common house plants, one that you would have seen decades ago at a time when only a handful of green plants were found in the average home (at a time when outdoor greenery was more common, and the need for indoor greenery was less important than it is today).

Many varieties are cultivated for indoor use (over 130 according to the [International Sansevieria Society](#)), largely

because of their different patterns and colors, which can be very striking. ranging from white-edged to deep green (like the one shown here), passing through various pale greens and yellows. The "snake" variety (not shown here) grows straight up until it falls from its own weight (at about 1 metre, just over 3 feet). All varieties have fleshy leaves (think succulent/cactus), which allows them to stand straight and tall.

If you want a plant that you virtually cannot kill, this is it!

There is a vast difference between ideal conditions and what a snake plant will tolerate, which is almost anything this side of baking or constant watering. I have known a snake plant to survive months without water; and it can live in very low light. {xtypo_rounded3}One person told me that she was tired of her snake plant but could not bring herself to throw away a living plant, and so stuck it into a closet, hoping that it would die. Months later, she found it shrivelled in bone-dry soil but still alive, which prompted her to bring it back into her life.{/xtypo_rounded3}



Sansevieria Trifasciata, Photo by Martin Olsson Even though it will take as much light as you can give it, if you place it in full sun, you run the risk of the leaves paling, burning, and far less attractive. Personally, I would not put a snake plant in a hot sunny window, and if were to take one outside for summer, I would keep it in full shade (to read about how to manage the move outdoors, read "Light" on page 11 of [Keeping Them Alive](#) [Keeping](#)

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New leaves and plants grow from the soil without coaxing, often through a crack in its pot or from drainage holes. Why would its pot have a crack in it? Snake plants are good at busting out at the seams (by sending out new plants off to side, underground; they are strong enough to break the pot), indicating that it is time to repot or to split the plant into several smaller ones!

Like all plants, snake plant enjoys an all-natural diet. For more on this topic, see the topics "Feeding" and "Fertilizers" on page 21 of [Keeping Them Alive](#).

I have never seen a parasitic insect on a snake plant.