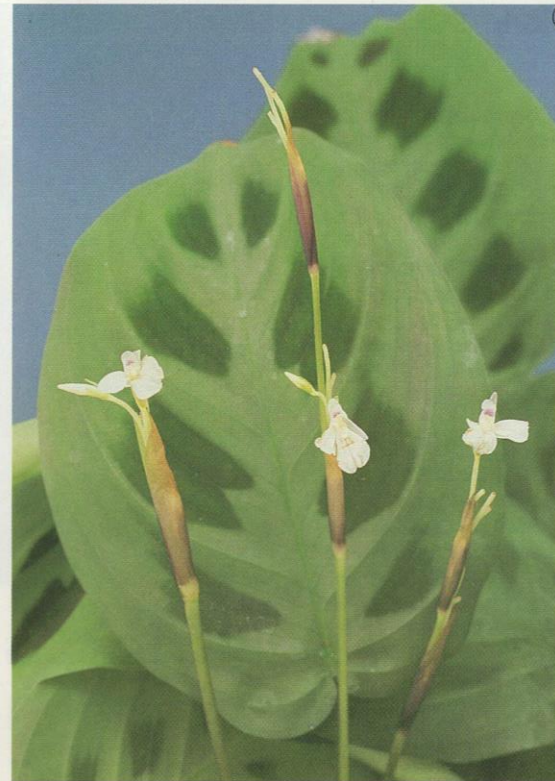


Prayer Plant

Maranta leuconeura var. *erythronera*



Prayer Plants have attractive leaves with unusual markings. Some are difficult to cultivate, but there are varieties that are easier to grow in the home.



Prayer Plants occasionally produce small, rather magnificent white or pink flowers.

Buying Tips

Check that the leaves are healthy, lush and have a good, clear color.

Lifespan: Several years.

Season: All year.

Difficulty quotient: Rather difficult; needs high temperatures and humidity.

In Brief

Size and growth rate

Prayer Plants are low foliage plants with decorative, beautifully marked leaves. Rarely reach a height of more than 12-15 inches.

Flowering and fragrance

Rarely bloom in cultivation. Flowers are small, white and have no fragrance.

Light and temperature

High temperatures in summer; can tolerate

temperatures down to mid-lower 60's in winter. Shady position; direct sunlight causes the leaf edges to curl up.

Watering and feeding

Water frequently in summer and mist often. Add a weak fertilizer solution every other week. Water less in winter and do not feed.

Soil and transplanting

Repot in spring in light, well-drained potting soil with extra peat moss.

Grooming

To shape, remove long stems. Otherwise, remove withered leaves.

Propagating

Easiest by division. (See page 3.)

Environment

Prayer Plants are lovely in an arrangement on the floor of a conservatory, in the base of larger tub specimens, or as solitary plants. Thrive best in a humid greenhouse.

Prayer Plant—beautifully marked leaves

Maranta is a genus of about 20 species found in the rain forests of tropical America. Many have large green leaves with unusual markings and reddish undersides. Some are difficult to cultivate indoors and thrive best in a humid greenhouse. There are varieties that require attention, but are easier to grow.

Shallow roots

Prayer Plants have shallow root systems and are, therefore, often grown in flat pots. Some have tuberous roots.

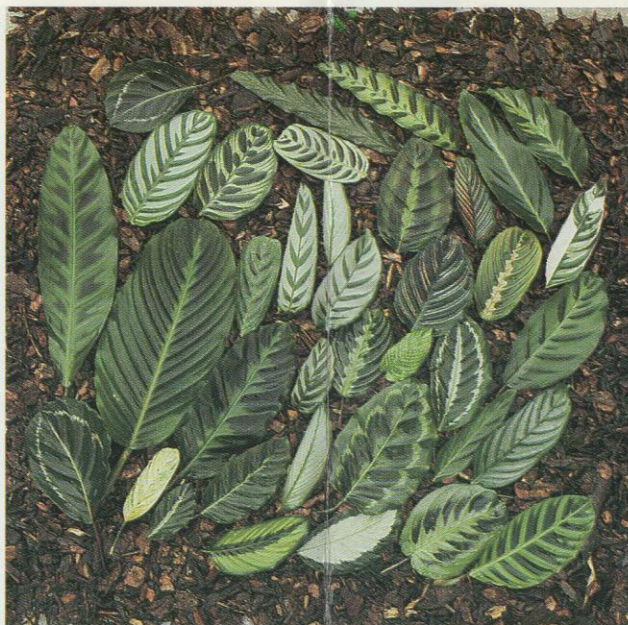
These plants are grown for their attrac-

tively marked leaves. The flowers are small, white and inconspicuous. They are surrounded by two or four small bracts.

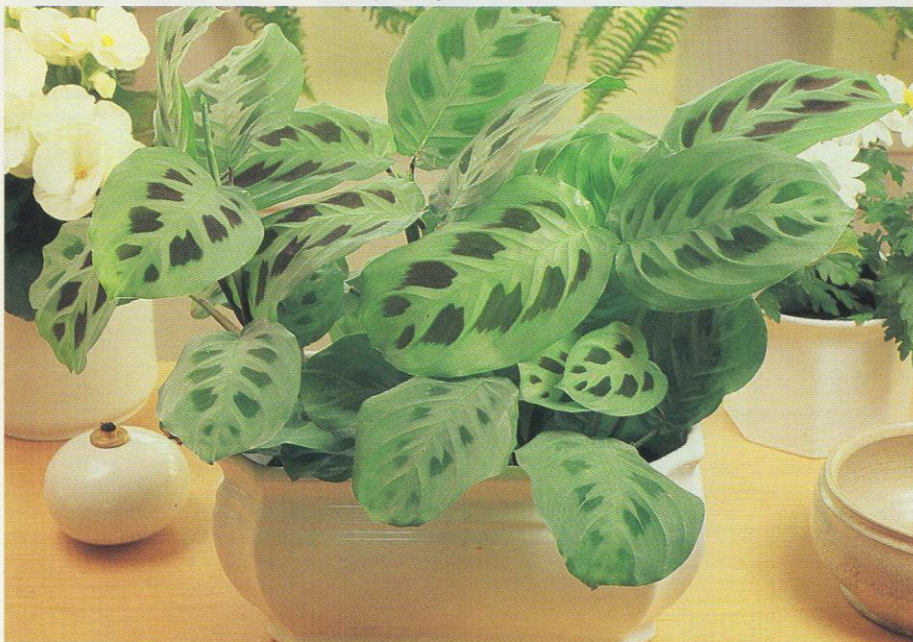
Prayer Plants need plenty of heat and humidity during growth. As woodland plants, they cannot tolerate direct sunshine.

Says "goodnight"

As darkness falls the leaves fold up into a "praying" position. They close themselves up, leaf to leaf, like two praying hands. Some varieties are not able to fold themselves up completely.



Many varieties of *Maranta* have large green leaves with unusual markings and reddish undersides.



Plant Doctor

Leaves turn pale with too much sun or insufficient fertilizer.

The leaves turn brown along the edges if the plant is too cold, stands in a draft, or the humidity is too low.

Red spider mite may be the culprit if the plant looks generally unhappy and starts to get yellow leaves. Look under the leaves. The mites themselves are tiny; look for their fine webbing. Isolate the

plant immediately and spray with miticide.

The leaves droop and turn yellow or brown if the plant is too dry. Prayer Plants like regular, even watering—do not allow the soil to become dry.

NOTE: Pesticides not used according to label directions can be harmful to man, animals, and plants. Use only pesticides that have labels with directions for home and garden use. Always read and follow label directions.



Propagating Prayer Plants

Division

It is easiest to propagate Prayer Plants by dividing the roots. Cuttings may give more plants but they are rather difficult. Divide in spring when potting plants on for the new season. It is best to carefully pull the roots apart by hand, since cutting makes unnecessary wounds. Once divided, shake the sections to remove old soil.

The soil should be airy and well-drained with plenty of organic matter. Use a mixture of $\frac{3}{4}$ potting soil and $\frac{1}{4}$ peat moss. Provide good drainage with gravel or charcoal in pot base.

Species and varieties commonly grown

Maranta bicolor is a Brazilian species that reaches a height of 12-15 inches. It has tuberous roots and oval green leaves that are paler along the center vein and have two rows of brown spots along the edges.

Maranta leuconeura var. *kerchoveana* is sometimes known as "Rabbit's-Tracks." It has light green leaves with brown patches and a pale central strip. It curls up and "prays" at night-fall.

Maranta leuconeura var. *erythroneura* has velvety

green leaves with darker patches. Clearly defined red veins extend in a "fishbone" pattern from the lighter green central area. The undersides are marked with reddish-purple. Very attractive.

Maranta leuconeura var. *leuconeura* has dark green leaves with silvery-green centers and veins. The undersides are red-purple.

