



Devil's Backbone (*Euphorbia tithymaloides*)

Also known as Zigzag Plant, Redbird Cactus, or Slipper Plant — is a tropical succulent with a dramatic, zigzagging stem structure that gives it its spine-like nickname.

Care Instructions

- **Light:** Prefers bright, indirect sunlight. Can tolerate some direct sun in cooler months but needs protection from harsh rays in summer.
- **Watering:** Drought-tolerant. Water every 1–2 weeks, allowing soil to dry out between sessions.
- **Soil:** Use well-draining soil, ideally a cactus or succulent mix. Neutral to slightly acidic pH is ideal.
- **Temperature:** Thrives in 18–29°C (65–85°F). Not frost-hardy; bring indoors if temps drop below 10°C (50°F).
- **Humidity:** Average indoor humidity is fine, but it appreciates a bit more in dry climates.
- **Fertilizer:** Optional. Use diluted houseplant fertilizer monthly during growing season.
- **Propagation:** Easy via stem cuttings. Let cut ends callus before planting in perlite or sandy soil.
- **Caution:** The milky sap is toxic and can cause skin irritation. Keep away from pets and children.



Ecological Benefits

- **Air Purifier:** Helps remove household toxins, improving indoor air quality.
- **Drought Resilience:** Ideal for water-wise gardens and xeriscaping.
- **Carbon Capture:** Like all green plants, it absorbs CO₂ and releases oxygen during photosynthesis.
- **Habitat Adaptability:** Grows in tropical understories, rocky slopes, and coastal regions, supporting biodiversity in its native range.



Other Interesting Details

- **Medicinal History:** Traditionally used to treat skin conditions like eczema and ringworm due to its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Cultural Symbolism:** In some cultures, it's seen as a symbol of protection and healing, believed to ward off negative energy.

- **Architectural Appeal:** Its zigzag stems and glossy leaves make it a striking ornamental plant for modern interiors.
- **Varieties:** Includes dwarf types like *Euphorbia tithymaloides* 'Nana' which are compact and ideal for small spaces.
- **Blooming:** Produces red, bird-shaped bracts in spring and summer, though they're short-lived.
- **Toxicity:** All parts of the plant are poisonous if ingested. Handle with care and wear gloves when pruning.