

The cultivation of Coca Plants

Coca plants can grow well in a livingroom, if you keep the following in mind:

Soil mixture

Coca plants prefer a well aerated and mineral rich soil that absorbs water easily. Mix 4 parts of a good potting soil (preferably one recommended for Hydrangea, Rhododendron or Heather) with 1 part cocopeat and 1 part vermiculite. Some lava meal (1 teaspoon/container a year) provides trace elements. The optimum pH value is 5,8 (5,0-7,0) and the optimum EC value is 1,2 mS (0,5-1,6).

Temperature and Moisture

Coca requires an average temperature of 25°C (20-30°C). Incidental and short cold spells (a drop to a minimum of 10°C for a couple of hours) does not harm an adult plant, but seedlings should be kept warm at all time. The air humidity should be at a constant high level. Placing the plant close to dish(es) filled with water will ensure this. Young plants can be covered with transparent plastic. Be sure there are sufficient holes in the plastic so a surplus of warmth escapes. Watering is an important issue. Overwatering causes root rot, first shown by pale and falling leaves. Tap water generally contains lime that causes an alkaline reaction, so never use that! Fresh rainwater is the best option. Be sure the water is at room temperature before use. Only water when the first 2 cm of the soil surface is dry.

Light

Coca is a tropical plant, that means it prefers a daylength of at least 12 hours. In wintertime artificial light is required for young plants, use LED growing light. In summer the plant can be placed outdoors. Be sure the spot is not windy, and some shade around midday is to be preferred. In wintertime (from October) a spot on a sun exposed window sill is necessary. Support with artificial light is recommended.

Fertilizer

From the beginning of March till the end of September the plant needs fertilizer. Use a good fertilizer that contains trace elements also (iron and magnesia deficiency is a known hazard). Peters 2nd phase (available in our webshop, ordernumber 850400) is an excellent alternative. Young plants under artificial light also need some food in winter.

Diseases

The plant is not very susceptible to diseases, but a change of location often causes stress and leaf drop. Tender love and care (less watering, high humidity, lots of light) will soon help the plant to recover. Red spidermite and aphids may occur, but can be controlled easily.

Cuttings and sowing

If the plant grows well, a maximum of one third of the older leaves can be harvested for soothing tea or chewing. Although difficult, cuttings can be made during spring and early summer. These cuttings grow best in a heated propagator kept away from direct sunlight. Older plants will bloom in late spring and produce berries in late summer. Each berry contains 1 seed, that must be sown immediately after harvest.

Good luck!
Ton Vreeken