

The best way to document a plant collection is to give each plant a simple record and update it as things change. A notebook, spreadsheet, or digital document can work well, as long as it is easy for you to find and use.

Start with a record for each plant

Choose one place to keep your records, then make an entry for every plant you want to track. If your collection feels large, begin with a few plants and add the rest over time. There is no need to identify or measure everything in one sitting.

Give each plant a name or number that will help you match it to its record. This is useful if you have several plants of the same kind. A small label in the pot can help, especially while you are getting started.

Include the details that are useful to you. A simple record might have:

- The plant's common name and, if known, its scientific name
- Where it came from and when you acquired it
- Its usual location in your home or garden
- The date and details of repotting or propagation
- Notes about growth, flowering, pests, or changes in condition

It is fine to leave a name blank if you are unsure. You can add it later, rather than guessing and making the record harder to use.

Take useful photographs

A clear photograph gives you a point of comparison that written notes may miss. Take one picture of the whole plant and another of a leaf, flower, or other detail that helps identify it. Try to use natural light and a plain background so the plant is easy to see.

Save the date with each image, and use the plant's name or number in the file name. If you keep digital records, put the photos in a folder for that plant or add them directly to its entry. For a paper notebook, you could print a small photo or write down where the digital image is stored.

Take another photo after a noticeable change, such as new growth or a move to a different spot. You do not need to photograph every leaf. A few consistent views over time can show how the plant is developing.

Keep notes you can return to

Record what you do and what you observe, especially after a change in care. A note might say that you moved a plant closer to a window, noticed yellow leaves, or divided it into two pots. Add the date so you can see the order of events.

Keep care notes practical rather than trying to create a perfect schedule. For example, record when you watered if that helps you notice patterns, but also check the plant and its soil before watering again. A record is a guide to what has happened, not a substitute for looking at the plant.

Set aside a little time now and then to add new plants, update names, and remove entries for plants you no longer have. A modest record that you enjoy using will serve your collection well.

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