



GROWING NEEM

A native of India, neem is an extraordinarily hardy tree that thrives in ecosystems ranging from the Sahara Desert to the wet salty environment of the Florida Keys. The only pests known to harm it are directly related to overwatering: slugs (which are mollusks not insects) and several strains of root rot.

In Florida and other tropical climates, neem quickly becomes a valuable shade tree, growing up to eight feet per year under optimum conditions. In colder climates, neem trees can easily be grown in large pots as highly decorative houseplants, repelling pests such as scale and spider mites that can kill common indoor plants like ficus or palm trees.

For best results, plant your neem tree in the largest pot you can move, since they're happiest spending winter months in a sunny window and summers outdoor. They're also like goldfish and they'll only grow as large as their pots allow. If you don't have a compost pile or favorite potting soil, ask your local nursery to recommend their best soil for houseplants. Please don't use soil from your yard unless you're an expert gardener and know exactly what you're doing.

Water thoroughly after transplanting and then wait until soil is dry to the touch before watering again. If leaves start to wilt in dry climates, spritz them with water or very dilute fish emulsion. **Don't overwater** – that's the easiest way to kill a neem tree. If possible, place your new tree in a spot where it is protected from afternoon sun and high winds. Once they're settled in, however, neem trees are happy in full sun and handle high winds well.

These trees are planted in soilless potting mixture (as required for national and international shipments) but microorganisms have been added to enhance growth and uptake of organic fertilizers. For optimum growth, fertilize weekly with fish emulsion at half the recommended rate and use a balanced organic fertilizer -- like 6-6-6 -- monthly while the tree is growing.

Neem trees, like many tropical plants, are day-length sensitive and will stop growing in the winter unless supplemental light is provided. If you expect to harvest neem year-round, make sure your tree receives as much natural light as possible during the day, then several hours of artificial light at night during the short days of winter. (It doesn't have to be a lot of light - a near-by living room lamp is fine.)

If you have any questions – or comments on these directions – please call or write. We're here to help and we learn a lot from our customers!

Stay Healthy and Happy,

Vicki Parsons

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