

SIZING GUIDE

Pot Size, Soil Volume & Watering Amounts

Pot diameter sets how much soil a plant lives in, and soil volume sets how much water it can hold. Volumes below assume a standard-depth pot; shallow pots hold about a third less.

POT DIAMETER	APPROX. SOIL VOLUME	A FULL WATERING (ABOUT 1/4 TO 1/3 OF VOLUME)	TYPICAL PLANTS
2 in (5 cm)	0.3 cup (0.08 L)	1 to 2 tablespoons	Seedlings, tiny succulents
3 in (7.5 cm)	0.75 cup (0.2 L)	3 to 4 tablespoons	Rooted cuttings, mini plants
4 in (10 cm)	1.5 cups (0.35 L)	1/3 to 1/2 cup	Starter pothos, small ferns
5 in (13 cm)	3 cups (0.7 L)	3/4 to 1 cup	Young philodendron, orchids
6 in (15 cm)	5 cups (1.2 L)	1 1/4 to 1 2/3 cups	Peace lily, spider plant
8 in (20 cm)	11 cups (2.6 L)	2 3/4 to 3 2/3 cups	Monstera, snake plant
10 in (25 cm)	20 cups (4.7 L)	5 to 6 1/2 cups	Fiddle leaf fig, palms
12 in (30 cm)	35 cups (8.3 L)	8 3/4 to 11 2/3 cups	Large monstera, bird of paradise
14 in (35 cm)	55 cups (13 L)	14 to 18 cups	Floor trees

Why? Water until it runs from the drainage hole, then stop. The amounts above are what a dry pot usually absorbs; if far less soaks in, the soil may be hydrophobic and needs a slow bottom-soak.

The 1 to 2 inch rule

Step up one pot size (1 to 2 in, 2 to 5 cm wider) at a time. A pot that is too large holds soil no roots reach, which stays wet and starves roots of oxygen.

Root-bound signs

- Roots circling the outside of the root ball
- Water runs straight through in seconds
- Roots out of drainage holes or lifting the plant
- Top-heavy, dries out in a day
- Growth stalled despite good light

Plants that like it snug

Snake plant, ZZ, peace lily, hoya, moth orchid, spider plant and most succulents grow and bloom better slightly root-bound. Repot these only when the pot is truly full.

Shallow or deep?

Shallow, wide pots for succulents, cacti, bonsai-style figs and anything with fibrous surface roots. Deep pots for palms, taprooted plants and tall figs that need anchoring.

Material changes dry-down

Terracotta	breathes; dries fastest; salts crust on the outside
Plastic / nursery	holds water; light; easy to read by weight
Glazed ceramic	like plastic but heavy and stable
Fabric	air-prunes roots; dries fast
Self-watering	steady for thirsty plants; risky for succulents and aroids that like a dry spell

Measure it

Diameter is the inside width at the rim. Soil volume of a standard pot is roughly 0.4 x diameter cubed (inches) in cubic inches; 14.4 cubic inches is a cup. Or just count cups as you fill it once and write it on the pot.