

BUYER'S GUIDE

Questions to Ask, In Store and Online

Good sellers like good questions. The answers tell you as much about the shop as about the plant.

ASK	A GOOD ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE	A WORRYING ANSWER SOUNDS LIKE
How long has this plant been here?	A specific span; a few weeks means it has settled	Just arrived today (shipping stress still ahead)
What light was it grown under?	Greenhouse shade cloth, or a stated window direction	Not sure, or under grow lights 24 hours
When was it last watered?	A day or two ago, and you can feel the soil	We water everything every morning
Has it been treated for pests?	Yes, with what and when; or a clear no with clean plants	Vague, or a flinch
Is this its nursery pot?	Yes, roots are visible when slid out	It has been potted into a sealed decorative pot
What do you do with returns?	A clear guarantee window	All sales final on live goods

Ordering online

- Check recent reviews with photos, not star counts
- Ask for a heat pack below 45°F (7°C) and avoid weekend shipping
- Choose the fastest shipping you can justify
- Unbox in daylight; photograph every side on arrival
- Know the guarantee: usually 48 to 72 hours to report damage
- Expect a week of sulking; do not repot on arrival

Pricing sanity

- Variegated plants cost more because they grow slower and propagate less reliably
- 'Rare' is often marketing; search the botanical name
- A larger pot size roughly doubles price each step up
- Cuttings are cheaper but riskier; rooted cuttings are the sweet spot
- Seasonal: prices dip late summer when nurseries clear stock

Sourcing ethically

- Slow-growing cacti, cycads and wild orchids are sometimes dug from the wild. Ask whether a plant is nursery propagated. International trade in many species is regulated under CITES; a legitimate seller can say where it came from.
- Prefer propagated, labeled plants
 - Be wary of bargain 'collected' specimens
 - Swaps and cuttings from friends are the greenest source