Container growing San Pedro Cactus

This is what a San Pedro cactus should look like.
Potting soil mixes

• Forget flower pots — unless you intend to practice bonsai. San Pedro or Peruvian Torch can grow to tree size as a cluster of columns. They need large space for their roots.

• Use 5-gallon or larger containers. Purchase potting soil mixes at Lowes, or The Home Depot, plus some construction grade course sand (not play sand), and lots of perlite for drainage. The best perlite is the large pieces of #3 horticultural grade; not the tiny stuff used for seedlings.

But most stores only sells the tiny stuff. You’d have to call around to plant nurseries - or places that rent huge plants for office lobbies?

• Our website has a method to make adequate cactus potting soil from products you can purchase at Lowes or Home Depot. See: sanpedroactus1.com/pottingsoil.htm
Making cactus potting soil –

**Basic:** 50% commercial potting mix + 50% perlite. Purchase from your local garden center. You can use small crushed rock - like 1/4 inch to 1/2 inch size. When you use small crushed rock, instead of perlite, a 20 gallon container will be too heavy to lift.

**Better:** 30-40% Commercial potting soil screened to remove wood chunks, 20-30% perlite, about 10-20% coir or peat moss, about 5% course sand. If you have real compost (the kind organic gardeners have) they use that instead of commercial potting soil. The "compost" sold at stores is crap. Don't use it.

**Complicated:** Our basic mixes, above, provide support for root development from rooting phase to transplanting into the earth. But collectors of rare cactus, who grow in small pots, make special mixes. These are not necessary for the rapid, huge growing trichocereus varieties.

From: [sanpedrocactus1.com/pottingsoil.htm](http://sanpedrocactus1.com/pottingsoil.htm)
We use #3 horticultural grade perlite. The pieces are large and the weight is like styrofoam. Perfect for large containers. There is a manufacturing place near to us in Richmond, CA where we can obtain it by the pickup truck load.

SUPPLIER: Norcal Perlite, Inc.
[https://www.norcalperlite.com](https://www.norcalperlite.com) tel.(510) 232-7337

Cactiguide.com is a wonderful resource website even if the owner is a fundamentalist Christian who no longer believes in evolution.
Containers for growing San Pedro

The larger the root system the faster your plant grows. Starting from a small flower pot used to root a cutting (first season) you should up-pot the next year to 2 to 4-gallon, then 10 or 20-gallon by the 3rd year.

Does your region freeze in the winter?

These are in what they call "Tree pots". If you can't plant in the earth because of winter freezes this is a good solution. Then you can use a mover's hand truck to bring the plant indoors until spring.

This is how it should look!

Perfect terra cotta pots with afternoon shade. A perfect location.

The containers can be easily watered with a hose because they drain perfectly — preventing stagnant water in the pot that could drown the roots. The plant at the right side is a San Pedro Cactus. Nice!
Light — the essential element for cactus

• **100% sun can cause sunburn** unless the plant has a full root system with lots of soil in a large container. Even then it may need some shade.

• Full morning sun with afternoon shade is best to keep them healthy & happy.

• Gradually introduce newly rooted cuttings from shady areas to full light to give it time to adjust.

• Never place a small potted plant in 100% all day sunlight. It can overheat & sunburn.
Cactus gone bad —please don't do this!

- Too little light causes etiolating—a skinny and spindly looking plant. This is common when cactus are used like house plants. *But they need more sunlight.*

They are not ferns
San Pedro indoors will need bright light, fresh potting soil every year or two, and non-alkaline, unchlorinated water. Rain water is perfect.

Sickly Bridgesii
The pots don't seem to have drainage holes. Skin color looks unhealthy.

New growth on top are thin from lack of adequate light.

Potting soil was water logged (in close up).

Skinny tip San Pedro
Etiolation from too little light. The top new growth should be the same diameter as the bottom. These pots may not have drainage...

Images from visitors to: sacredcactus.com/sacredcactus/CactusLog_2008.htm (skinny tips)
You can grow indoors!
These are in a sunroom in Canada. Over 30 years old, too!

We hope this short tutorial has been helpful. Have fun!