

GROWING INDOORS

With their foliage and blooms houseplants add beauty to the inside of your house and helps the transition from the outside to our indoor spaces. From promoting a positive well being, to naturally purifying and humidifying the air, plants can be vital in enhancing our work and living spaces.

This handout is meant to help you succeed in growing and caring for your house plants throughout the seasons.

House plants come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and different cultural requirements. Indoor conditions are drier by nature than most outdoor spaces, so it is helpful to keep this in mind when adapting your plants to your house.

LIGHT All plants have different light preferences. (See the 3 main categories). A south window exposure has the most intense light, with the east and west windows giving only two thirds the amount of the south. North windows have only one-fifth the amount of light. So put plants for full sun in the south, shade in the north, and filtered light in the east and west.

NUTRITION All living beings, including houseplants, need to feed – and as with light, the nutritional requirements vary widely by plant type. In general, fast growing plants with big leaves will use more nitrogen fertilizer, and slow growing plants in sandy soil will use very little fertilizer. If a plant gets more nutrition than it can metabolize, salts will build up in the soil and it will eventually slow down growth and cause root damage. It is important to hold back on fertilizer during a plant's normal dormant period, which in our northern hemisphere is winter. A fertilizer well balanced in N,P,K (eg 19-6-12) along with micro elements is recommended for most varieties when actively growing.

DISEASES The most common problem growing houseplants is over watering, which produces root rot (except in water plants and fish!) The

best way to avoid this is to water thoroughly, making sure all your plants drain well (holes in bottom of pot and good soil media), then allow to dry out before watering again. Common diseases include powdery mildew (looks like icing sugar) which can be controlled with fungicides.

PESTS The main insects to watch for in our northern climate, especially when purchasing or bringing plants indoors for the winter, are aphids, mites, whitefly and thrips. (see the 'Tropical Hibiscus Brochure' for insect details) On occasion mealybugs, and scale will hitch a ride from southern climates. Neem oil with pyrethrins is a broad spectrum organic pesticide we recommend using on all these pests.

FILTERED LIGHT (INDIRECT)

AIR PLANTS, Tillandsia

Air plants are epiphytes, meaning they can grow without soil and that makes tillandsia one of the easiest indoor plants to grow. Simply mist your air plants with water thoroughly once or twice a week (or soak them for a couple of hours weekly.) This will keep them nice and healthy.

ALOCASIA, African Mask

Prefers a tight fit in its pot, do not re-pot too often. Alocasia thrives in a moist environment and needs plenty of water during active growth. Place a pebble tray beneath it to create humidity. It has a dormant period in the fall where the leaves fade and die. Alocasia's need for water diminishes drastically during dormancy and should be reduced to moistening the soil once in a while. Water with room temperature rainwater, well or distilled water. Watch for aphids and spider mites. TOXIC TO PETS.

BROMELIAD, Cryptanthus Earth Stars

This houseplant can actually survive on florescent light alone and thrives in humid conditions, like in a bathroom. Be sure their "cups" are always filled with water—use distilled or rain water to prevent unsightly spots caused by hard water. In spring and summer only, apply a water-soluble complete fertilizer, diluted to half

strength, once a month, applying it directly to the soil-never in the cup.

CALATHEA, Peacock Plant

Colorful artistic markings on foliage. Requires thorough watering (but, do not over water). It likes humid surroundings (a pebble tray is recommended) and a light potting soil. Do not fertilize during the winter months.

FICUS ELASTICA, India Rubber Tree

Easy to grow. Attractive, glossy green foliage. Water evenly and use a well composted light potting soil. Changes in environment may cause the plant to drop lower leaves.

AIR PURIFIER.

FICUS LYRATA, Fiddle Leaf Fig

Large rippled or wavy fiddle shaped leaves. Keep soil lightly moist, using a heavier potting soil that drains well. Re-pot in a container with some stabilizing weight every other spring. Fertilize weekly.

AIR PURIFIER. TOXIC TO PETS.

HAWORTHIA, Zebra plant

Will grow in similar conditions to succulents. Water evenly and generously. In the summer, let the soil media dry out between waterings. In the winter, reduce watering to every other month. Never allow water to collect in the rosette. It likes warmer summers but cool in the winter (down to 50°F). Use a cactus mix or very fast-draining potting soil mixed with sand.

SANSEVIERIA, Snake Plant, Mother In Law Tongue

Grows easily in less-than-ideal conditions. Any potting soil will do. Light watering. Slow growing, but easily divided.

AIR PURIFIER. TOXIC TO PETS.

SPIDER PLANT, Chlorophytum comosum

Easy to grow. Use any good potting soil in a basket or tabletop container. Pups (babies) can be propagated by snipping them off when 2 inches in diameter.

AIR PURIFIER. MILDLY TOXIC TO PETS.

STRAWBERRY BEGONIA, Saxifraga

Keep lightly moist by even watering at all times,. Avoid extremes. Re-pot only one size up each spring. Use a good humus rich potting soil. Powdery mildew is an issue when kept at cool temperatures.

STREPTOCARPUS, Cape Primrose

Likes cooler temperatures and grows well under artificial light making it a great office plant. Keep soil moist, not wet during the spring and summer. Water less in winter but do not allow the plant to wilt. Fertilize every 2 weeks with a high phosphorus plant food diluted to ½ strength. Use African violet soil and re-pot each spring in a small container; barely covering the surface roots. If grown too wet it easily develops root rot.

TRADESCANTIA, Wandering Jew & Bridal Veil

A fast-growing vine. Most types tend to trail and look graceful in hanging baskets. Use any good potting soil. Keep the soil moist, but not soggy. During winter, allow the top ½ inch of the soil to dry out between waterings. Easy to grow. Keep plants attractively bushy by frequently pinching off growing tips. You can easily root pieces of the stems in water; then pot them in fresh potting soil and start all over again.

LOW LIGHT

FERNS, Boston, Asparagus, Button etc.

Ferns should not dry out - keep moist! Plant in light potting soil, rich in organic material.

AIR PURIFIER.

PACHIRA BRAID, Money Tree - (*Bright to low light*) TOLERATES BOTH

Likes consistent watering with good drainage. If you want to keep the plant small, remove older, larger branches at the crown of the plant as needed. Trees are braided together to form one thicker trunk. The trees dislike movement and draft. According to tradition it brings good fortune to a home.

PEPEROMIA, Watermelon, Ripple, Rainbow – (Bright to low light) TOLERATES BOTH.

Hardy plant, can endure occasional dryness. Light, rich potting soil is desirable but not necessary. Allow to dry between waterings.

PILEA PEPEROMIODES, Chinese Money plant, Pancake/UFO Plant

Allow to almost dry out between waterings. More watering is required in warmer, sunnier weather. Droopy leaves are a sign that the plant needs water. Rotate at least once a week to prevent it from getting lopsided. The large leaves accumulate dust, they benefit from regular showers, or wiping down with a moist cloth. Easy to propagate. The saying goes that if you place a coin in the soil with your Chinese money plant, it will spontaneously start to attract wealth.

PHILODENDRON MONSTERA, Swiss Cheese Plant

Monstera has a dense, bushy shape, but over time, it will begin to stretch and climb a trellis or wood totem. If you want to keep the plant compact, simply prune back the vining branches. Water when the soil feels dry to the touch. AIR PURIFIER. TOXIC TO PETS.

POTHOS, Devils Ivy

It is an easy-care vining plant that you can train onto a trellis or allow to tumble over the edge of a hanging basket. Water pothos whenever the soil feels dry, and trim back the plant if it starts to get leggy. Requires pinching to prevent it from growing in long, single stems. Produces stems that trail 8 feet or longer. Cut them back when they get too long and your plant will continue to look full and healthy. Pothos does well in both cool and warm room temperatures. Makes good cuttings

AIR PURIFIER. TOXIC TO PETS.

ZZ PLANT, Zamioculcas zamiifolia

One of the easiest plants to grow. Allow soil to dry between waterings.

AIR PURIFIER. MILDLY TOXIC TO PETS.

BRIGHT LIGHT (FULL SUN)

AUSTRALIAN CHESTNUT TREE, Castanospermum

Use a regular potting soil blended with cactus mix for drainage. Water moderately allowing soil to dry between; root rot can be a problem if the plant stands in wet soil or water. Does not need to be fertilized during the first year after acquiring. TOXIC SEEDS.

BOUGAINVILLEA

With the proper care it can bloom for 12 months of the year indoors in a warm spot. Let it dry out between waterings. Feed the plant with a liquid fertilizer designed for flowering plants. In the winter, reduce water and stop fertilizing to give the plant a rest period if you don't have enough direct sunlight to encourage year-round blooming. Avoid the temptation to re-pot your bougainvillea. The plants produce more flowers when their roots are slightly crowded in a container.

BRUGMANSIA, Angel Trumpet

Vigorous, pot in large container. Water deeply when the soil dries. Winter in a cool (above 45°F) porch/garage. Can be cut back hard if storage is an issue. TOXIC TO PETS.

CACTUS

Cacti require well-drained, gravelly soil, and little water. In the right placement, these are plants that truly thrive on neglect.

CITRUS

Very fragrant small white flowers with glossy deep green foliage. Water moderately. Use rich organic soil with compost.

CROTONS Bright light to shade TOLERATES BOTH

In summer plant outdoors in sun or dappled shade; move them into shadier area three weeks before bringing them in for winter, to acclimate to lower indoor light. Crotons don't like to be moved and will drop leaves. This may happen also if they are too cold, dry, or wet. Keep lightly moist and mist the leaves regularly if indoor air is dry.

Re-pot annually, increasing by only one pot size. MILDLY TOXIC TO DOGS.

GARDENIA

Cool nights 60°F and warm, humid days 75°F encourage blooms. Do not overwater, keeping the soil lightly moist; use a pebble tray to provide humidity. Use a slow release azalea fertilizer to top dress the pot. The growing mix should be 2 parts potting soil to 1 part peat moss.

GOLDFISH PLANT, Nematanthus

Water with room temperature water as often as needed to keep soil lightly moist in summer and when almost dry in winter. Mist the plant daily in summer. Plant in African violet soil and re-pot one size bigger in spring every two years.

GYNURA, Purple Passion Plant

Re-pot annually and propagate plants when two years old in order to rejuvenate. Keep soil lightly moist, water sitting on the leaves will cause dark patches. Only monthly watering during winter.

HIBISCUS Please see our *Tropical Hibiscus Pamphlet* for more information.

IVY Bright light to shade TOLERATES BOTH

Easily grown in baskets as well as pots. Light watering, will tolerate anything but total neglect.

AIR PURIFIER. TOXIC TO PETS.

JASMINE

Fertilize during the growing season and once during winter. Disturbing the plant will cause the blossoms to drop.

PACHYSTACHYS, Shrimp plant

Keep soil moist not wet. Allow to go dormant during the winter. Then resume fertilizing in March. Keep the plant away from dry heat and cold drafts.

SUCCULENTS

Succulents do best with soil that is normally considered poor, filled with inorganic elements. Over-watering is one of the most common problems. Too much fertilizer, especially high-nitrogen blends, increase leaf and root rot problems. Reduce watering in the winter period. Grow at 75-90°F.

Success with House Plants



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