

INDOOR PLANT CARE GUIDE

TIPS FOR KEEPING INDOOR PLANTS HAPPY



Indoor Plants can add color, beauty, and character to your living space! Here are a few key tips for keeping indoor plants happy and healthy in your home.

LIGHT

When arranging indoor plants in your home, consider their lighting needs. Some plants require lots of direct light to thrive, while others prefer lower levels of indirect light.

- Put plants that can tolerate full sun

in south- and west-facing windows, plants that like partial shade in east-facing windows, and low-light plants in north-facing windows.

- Most flowering plants need to be within three feet of a sunny window.
- Most plants require 12 to 16 hours of light per day.
- Rotate plants occasionally, to encourage even growth and prevent legginess.

WATER

Believe it or not, more indoor plants die from overwatering than from anything else! Knowing the watering requirements of your plants will go a long way in keeping them happy and healthy.

- Starting in late fall, water indoor plants sparingly until daylight hours begin to increase again in the new year.
- Water plants with room-temperature water. Cold water can be a shock to a indoor plants roots—like sticking your toes into an ice bath!
- Use filtered water if your tap water contains high amounts of minerals or chemicals. Fluoride can cause the leaf tips of some indoor plants, such as peace lilies, to turn brown.
- Add a few drops of ammonia to one quart of water used for indoor plants; it will improve foliage color and increase growth.
- Water indoor plants in unglazed clay pots more frequently, as the porous clay will absorb and evaporate some of the water.
- Frequent misting's under the leaves of indoor plants will discourage spider mites.
- If your indoor plants leaves are dripping, even when you haven't watered, it's trying to rid itself of excess water (a process called "guttation"). This makes a plant vulnerable to disease-causing fungi, so you'll want to avoid this problem by reducing the amount of water you're giving the plant, especially in winter months. Also, watch those drips because they contain salts, sugars, and other organics that could stain whatever it is they're dripping on.

HUMIDITY

Humidity is a tough factor to perfect, as most homes are fairly dry—especially in the winter. Here are some things to consider about humidity:

- Many of the most common indoor plants come from tropical regions, where humidity is naturally high. They will be happiest when the relative humidity is kept at 50 percent or higher.
- Plants like cacti and succulents can tolerate lower levels of humidity.
- Group indoor plants near each other to form a support group to cope with the low humidity of most winter homes.
- Set plants on shallow trays of moistened gravel to raise humidity.
- Occasionally turning on a humidifier near your plants can be effective at combating indoor dryness.



FERTILIZER

Most indoor plants respond well to feeding but be sure to follow the instructions included with whichever fertilizer you buy. • Too much fertilizer can be detrimental to a plant's health, so don't fertilize more than necessary.

- In winter, feed sparingly or not at all; indoor plants will be especially sensitive to overfeeding at this time of year, when most go into dormancy.
- Come spring, start to feed plants again. This, along with more hours of daylight, will help to kickstart their growing phase. Continue feeding through fall.
- A balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) works fine for indoor plants, though fertilizers with a higher ratio of nitrogen will promote greater foliage growth.
- For flowering plants, use a fertilizer with more phosphorous.



PESTS

Pests can be a real pain. They usually appear after outdoor plants are brought inside for the winter, or when a new indoor plant is brought home.

- To get rid of bugs in indoor plants, push a clove of garlic into the plant's soil. If the garlic sprouts and grows, just cut it back.
- Spider mites are apt to thrive in warm, dry houses. Frequent misting under the leaves of indoor plants will discourage them. A solution of 1 cup flour, ¼ cup buttermilk, and a gallon of cool water, applied in a mist, is a good organic deterrent.
- Small flies may occasionally appear around indoor plants. These are called fungus gnats and are harmless to plants (and humans) in their adult form, though their larvae can

damage young roots. Letting the soil dry out a bit between watering's can discourage fungus gnats from calling your indoor plants home.

- Your indoor plants may sprout bugs once brought inside your house because they no longer have outdoor predators.
- Remove aphids from indoor plants with a mixture of equal parts rubbing alcohol and water and add a drop of dishwashing detergent. Apply this to troubled plants with a soft brush.
- Mealybugs and scale are commonly seen on indoor plants. The mixture of rubbing alcohol, water, and dishwashing detergent outlined above works on mealybugs and scale, too. Regular monitoring of your indoor plants is key to beating an infestation.

WINTERTIME CARE

Even indoors, winter conditions can be tough on plants. Fewer hours of sunlight, drier air, and cooler indoor temperatures can take their toll, so be prepared.

- In colder regions, indoor plants that have been outside for the summer should be brought in at the end of July. A sudden cold spell will be too much of a shock for them to survive. This is also a good time to take cuttings.
- It's also good to bring in plants before you start heating your home. This gives them a chance to adjust. Wash them thoroughly before bringing them in to rid them of any pests.
- You can dig up your rosemary, basil, tarragon, oregano, marjoram, English thyme, parsley, and chives to grow them inside as houseplants. Keep them in a cool, sunny spot, and allow the soil to dry out before watering. Snip off the leaves as needed in the kitchen, but do not strip them completely.
- Divide and re-pot any pot-bound plants so they will grow well during spring and summer. Prune judiciously to create a compact, attractive specimen.
- Provide extra protection to indoor plants on windowsills if it is very cold. Place cardboard between the plants and the glass. Be sure the plants don't touch the windowpanes.
- As indoor plants are growing more slowly in December light, cut down on watering by half until active growth resumes. Hold off on fertilizing as well.
- If your plants seem a little worse for the wear after winter ends, provide them with more sunlight, fresh air, and frequent bathing.

MORE CARE TIPS

- Save the water from cooking pasta. Let it cool, then use it to water indoor plants. The plants will appreciate the starchy supplement. (If the soil of your indoor plant get algae, loosen the dirt in your pots periodically.)
- Open the doors and windows when temperatures permit to give your house a change of air. This will benefit you and your indoor plants.
- Re-invigorate your indoor plants by removing the top 1/4 inch of soil and top-dressing with fresh potting soil.
- If your indoor plants leaves grow dusty, gently wipe them down with a wet paper towel. Too much dust can clog a plant's stomata (pores), making it harder for the plant to "breathe."