

LOW-LIGHT, LOW-CARE INDOOR PLANTS

AS THE DAYS GROW SHORTER, SURROUND YOURSELF WITH LOVERS OF LOW LIGHT



Less water, less light, and less care. If you're like most people, you have little time to fuss with plants yet you love the character and style that indoor plants bring to indoor settings. Perhaps you don't have that perfect sunny window? Not a worry. Plants with foliage color or those that flower in low light are the most carefree way to get a lush effect.

INDOOR PLANT FAVORITES

Numerous common indoor plants are easy to care for and can be exotically colorful; in fact, some foliage can often be dazzling. Take **dieffenbachia**, which produces abundant leaves in variegated patterns of cream, yellow, or white. Its upright habit makes it ideal for any setting, from kitchen to bath to corner office or office corner.



Dieffenbachia.

Ferns are another favorite for low-light settings, and none so much perhaps as the **Boston fern**. Its discovery was a happy accident: The plant came to the attention of Fred C. Becker, a florist in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when, in 1894, a nurseryman in Philadelphia shipped 200 fern plants to Becker. (Victorians loved ferns!) He noticed that one fern was

distinctly different from the rest. He began to propagate it, and soon thereafter, botanists identified it and proposed the name.

Light needs aside, the Boston fern can be fussy in winter. In northern climes, it survives best in a room that's kept cool (50° to 55°F) and has a south-facing window. Water only occasionally until you see new fronds appear (sometime in February), then increase water.

FLOWERING INDOOR PLANTS FOR LOW LIGHT

Love plants that bloom? Flowering plants such as **spathiphyllum** and **anthurium** have been bred to produce flowers nearly all year long.

Look for **anthuriums** with flower colors beyond the usual red. Purple, lavender, pink, and hot-orange blooms cover plants 10 months out of the year. Because of their multiheading characteristic, there can be dozens of flowers on the plant at a time.

EYE-CATCHING INDOOR PLANTS FOR LOW LIGHT

Crotons like more light, which brings out their rich colors, but do not put them in direct sun. (However, if the leaves become dull—or worse, fall off—move it to a brighter spot.) Water sparingly; these plants also can go without water for long periods.

‘Red Gold’ aglaonemas are tough plants, with thick, leathery leaves tolerant of low humidity and vividly splattered with hundreds of red, yellow, and gold spots. ‘Red Gold’ requires little light and will thrive in a north window.

Calatheas do well in east or west windows with about 50 percent humidity. Spray them daily or place pots on a tray of pebbles and water. Look for **‘Dottie’ calathea**. Its round, shiny leaves are a blend of purple and black, but it’s the vibrant burgundy zigzag lines on each leaf that set this plant apart from all others.

‘Brasil’ philodendron, aka heart leaf, sports lemon and lime—color stripes on every green, heart-shape leaf. The vining plants make excellent hanging baskets.

‘Autumn’ and **‘Prince of Orange’** have burnt- and brightorange leaves. These philodendrons are self-heading, meaning that there are multiple growth leaders, and their leaves are thick and broad to tolerate low humidity. Other colorful philodendrons in the same class include **‘Moonlight’**, a brilliant yellow, and **‘Black Cardinal’**, which has deep-burgundy leaves that are almost black.

The **spider plant**, a mainstay of low-light situations, has a colorful cousin, the **‘Flash Fire’ mandarin plant**. Discovered in Indonesia, it’s not what you might think: This variety does not produce offsets or runners like spider plants do. Instead, the plant grows upright in a whorl of oblong leaves. The main stem and leaf ribs are brilliant orange. ‘Flash Fire’ is happy in an east or west window.

Finally, give a cheer for **rex begonias**: They beautify indoor windows with their stunning mixes of colored leaves. Some are bred to tolerate [lower](#) humidity and are even more spectacular in color. Favorite rex begonia varieties to look for are **‘Fireworks’**, a plum and silver combination, and **‘River Nile’**, noteworthy for wavy, spiral leaves that are 6 inches across and colored chartreuse with ruby markings. In winter, it produces pink flowers to help you make it to spring.