

Indoor Plants

Houseplants provide interest through color, texture, form and the warmth they add to any room. Varying in size and needs, there are indoor plants to fit everyone's lifestyle. Beautiful and beneficial, houseplants help filter toxins commonly found in nearly every household. Research done by NASA shows that common houseplants can absorb benzene (found in synthetic fibers, plastics, inks, oils, detergents), formaldehyde (carpeting, furniture, clothing, paper goods), trichloroethylene (paints, adhesives, dry cleaning, inks) and other air pollutants such as common cleaning products. Houseplants make a beautiful and healthful addition to any environment!

GROWING CONDITIONS

Most houseplants are native to tropical regions, growing below the tree canopy in rich, moist soil. Because they are generally from a shady environment with relatively even temperatures, they can adapt to living in our homes and offices. The subtle variations in their natural climate resulted in a wide variety of plants for different conditions. There are three main factors to consider when choosing an indoor plant: light, water and temperature/humidity.

Light— Will the plant get direct sunlight or will it sit away from a window? What direction does the window face? Are there window treatments or awnings that will influence the light levels?

Water— What are the plant's water needs? Will it be compatible with other plants you already have?

Temperature and Humidity— Will the plant's location be warm or cool? If it is in a window, is the window insulated? Is there a high level of humidity, such as in a bathroom? Will the plant be near drafts from doors or vents?

WATERING AND FEEDING

The best way to see if your plant needs water is to check the soil. Put your finger into the soil about an inch deep—if it's still moist, wait and check again in a few days. After a short time you will come to know your plants and the watering needs of each. As a general rule of thumb, water one to three times a week in the summer, dependent upon each plant's needs. Once winter arrives your plants will require (and want) less water, so decrease the schedule to once every week or two.

Get in the habit of feeding your houseplants regularly. There are many quality liquid fertilizers available that make feeding easy. Per package directions, add fertilizer (to the water) every other time you water your plants. Slow release fertilizers are also available. Because they slowly release their nutrients into the soil, this type of application need only be done twice a year.

PREVENTING PESTS AND DISEASE

Although books are written on the subject, the beginning of most potted plants' problems is over or under watering. Excess water will stress a plant and make it susceptible to opportunistic pests and diseases. Many pests can be washed off by spraying water on the leaves (i.e. in the shower). Neem oil and Dr. Earth Home and Garden Insect Spray are natural solutions that can clear up insect, mite and fungus problems.

Prevention is truly the best cure. Establishing a regular watering and feeding schedule will do wonders to keep your plants healthy and free of pests/diseases. Always remember, should you have questions or sick plants you need help with, we're only a phone call or a visit to your neighborhood garden center away!

Indoor Plants

REPOTTING

For the most part, houseplants grow relatively slowly. For this reason, they generally only need repotting once every year or two. When a plant's roots are growing out the bottom of the pot, or you are unable to keep the soil moist, it is time to repot.

Choose a pot that is one size larger than the old pot the plant was living in and as always, use a good quality, free-draining potting soil. Repotting should be done while the plant is actively growing, *not* when it is dormant and resting.

EASY CARE AIR PURIFIERS

One plant per 100 square feet of your home or office is all it takes to breathe healthier air. Pollutants are absorbed by plant leaves, their roots and the bacteria that feed on them. As biology would have it, the pollutants are converted to nutrients the plant can use, resulting in a big, happy "sigh" of oxygen released from the foliage.

The following are examples of easy-care, air-purifying plants:

- Bamboo or Reed Palm/*Chamaedorea sefrizii*
- Chinese Evergreen/*Aglaonema modestum*
- Cornstalk Dracaena/*Dracaena fragrans*
- Golden Pothos/*Epipremnum aureum*
- Peace Lily/*Spathiphyllum*
- Rubber Plant/*Ficus elastic*
- Snake Plant or Mother-In-Law's Tongue /*Sansevieria trifasciata*
- Spider Plant /*Chlorophytum comosum*
- Weeping Fig/*Ficus benjamina*

FAVORITES LISTED BY LIGHT NEEDS

High Light

Chenille/*Acalypha hispida*—Moderate weeping growth produces small serrated leaves and fuzzy, red, tassel-like flowers. Temperature minimum 55°F. Likes high humidity, mist frequently, do not let soil dry out completely. Prefers bright, indirect sunlight (i.e. a bright bathroom or kitchen). Fertilize with a bloom booster spring through autumn, pinch back tips to keep the plant full and dead-head spent flowers.

Croton/*Codiaeum variegatum* 'Pictum'—Moderate growth generates a large, shrub-like plant. Oak-shaped leaves are a backdrop of glossy green overlaid with yellow, orange and red veining and margins. Temperature minimum 50°F, avoid cold drafts. They benefit from misting the leaves regularly. Water sparingly during winter months, fertilize with a balanced indoor plant food spring through autumn. Prefers moist, well-drained soil. Repot in the spring.

Hoyal/*Hoya carnosa*—Vining growth is moderate to fast with oval, somewhat thickened leaves. Fragrant white flowers with a red star in the center are borne in clusters along the stems. Take care to hang in a location that sticky residue from the flowers won't stain. Temperature minimum 50°F. Mist leaves regularly when the plant is not blooming. Let the soil dry slightly between watering, fertilize spring through autumn without feeding when in bloom.

Indoor Plants

Jade/*Crassula argentea*—Slow-moderate growth eventually reaching 4 x4 feet, can be a very long-lived species (over 50 years). Segmented- looking stems that become almost woody with age support small, thick, glossy bright green leaves. Temperature minimum 45°-50°F and it likes to be kept at this range in the winter otherwise growth may become lanky followed by some leaf drop. Tolerates dry air and prefers some drought in-between watering, over watering results in root rot. Fertilize with a cactus formula spring through summer. Prefers well-drained soil, tolerates being root bound, repot in spring.

Yucca/*Yucca elephantipes*—Growth from the point of topping produces a tuft of tough, linear foliage that won't gain much in height; therefore, height depends on where the plant was topped and is variable. Temperature minimum 45°F. Tolerates dry air and prefers moist, well-drained soil. Water liberally spring through autumn, then let the soil dry out in-between watering during the winter (also let dry out if in less light). Fertilize regularly with a balanced formula during the summer.

Moderate Light

Begonia/*Begonia rex* 'Escargot'—One of the most marvelous foliage plants known! Growth of vividly colored, asymmetrically spiraling leaves is slow to moderate, forming a small mounding plant. Temperature minimum 55°F. High humidity but avoid spraying foliage with mist which can lead to powdery mildew. Bright indirect sunlight with moist, well-drained soil; under-water rather than over-water. Repot annually in spring.

Fiddle Leaf Ficus/*Ficus lyrata*—Slow to moderate growth forms a tree-shaped habit that can grow to the ceiling. Large, waxy leaves are shaped like an up-side-down fiddle. Temperature minimum 50°F. Mist leaves regularly, clean leaf surface regularly with a damp sponge and avoid direct sunlight during the hottest part of the day (afternoon sun). Water with tepid water more liberally spring through autumn than in winter. Repot in spring every other year.

Neon Pathos/*Epipremnum aureum* 'Neon'—Hanging heart-shaped foliage that grows moderate to fast and is a striking lime-green color. Temperature minimum 50°F. Benefits from occasional misting and moderate watering. Prefers bright light but avoid direct sunlight. Pinch back branches to keep the plant full and compact.

Split Leaf Philodendron/*Monstera deliciosa*—Climbing growth, woody stems and aerial roots accompanied by large, heart-shaped leaves that become perforated with age and vary in size. They need the support of a trellis or moss pole. Minimum temperature 50°F. Regular misting and sponging off of the leaves is enjoyed, as is bright, indirect light. Water sparingly in the winter, fertilize with a higher nitrogen formula spring through autumn.

Variegated Spider Plant/*Chlorophytum comosum*—Grows moderately fast and produces cascading linear foliage that is bright green with white striping down the center. Small white flowers are borne on long, pendulous stalks which produce small plantlets (baby Spider Plants). In humid conditions the plantlets will begin forming roots in the air. Temperature minimum 35°F. Occasional misting is enjoyed. Fertilize and water regularly spring through autumn, but sparingly during winter months. Repot young plants annually in the spring, older plants when they start to grow out of their pot.

Indoor Plants

Low Light

Chinese Evergreen/*Aglaonema commutatum* 'Silver Queen'—Clump-forming plant with medium sized glossy dark green leaves variegated with a detailed pattern of silver. Temperature minimum is 55°F. Let soil dry out between waterings, as the roots are susceptible to root rot, especially in low light. Shallow pots are best to facilitate the clumping nature of the plant and to promote good drainage.

Lemon Lime *Dracaena*/*Dracaena warneckii* 'Lemon Lime'—Upright in habit, this plant has dark green linear leaves adorned with brilliant green and yellow striping. Temperature minimum is 55°F. Tolerates dry air but enjoys some misting of the leaves. Keep moderately moist from spring through autumn, then water less in the winter. Occasionally sponge off leaves to keep them clean. Repot when pot is outgrown.

Peace Lily/*Spathiphyllum wallisii*—Tuft-forming clump of lance-shaped leaves gives rise to elegant white flowers shaped like a sail (spath) with a central rod (spadix). Temperature minimum 50°F. Avoid cold drafts. Enjoys high humidity and misting of the foliage. Prefers to stay evenly moist. If left to dry out, the leaves will droop down, only to perk back up when watered. Repot annually in the spring.

Rabbit Foot Fern/*Davallia bullata*—Compact growth with divided fronds and unique aerial roots that are covered in light colored hairs. Temperature minimum 40°F. Will flourish with moist soil and regular misting of the fronds. Older fronds will turn yellow and die back—remove these. New fronds will uncurl from the aerial roots. Feed with an acidic fertilizer.

Tricolor Maranta/*Maranta leuconeura* 'Erythroneura'—Hanging habit with round, dark velvety-green foliage accented by bright red veining and yellow splotching along the mid-vein. Temperature minimum 50°F. Keep moderately moist in the spring through summer months, but let the soil dry between waterings during the winter. Fertilize regularly. Repot every other spring.