

growing, using fewer resources, and the extra fertilizer can cause severe damage or plant death.

Insects/Diseases

Houseplants can be prone to insects and diseases so careful. Attention should be given to catch problems early. Check the plant when watering for any visible changes that can come from these issues. Common houseplant insects include spider mites, aphids, white flies, and mealy bugs. Common diseases can include various fungal infections. There are many available resources to help identify and control these problems.

Light Requirements of Common House Plants

Low Light

- Pothos
- Chinese Evergreen
- Snake Plant

Medium Light

- Spider Plant
- Peace Lilly
- African Violet

High Light

- Aloe Vera
- Norfolk Island Pine
- Holiday Cacti

For more information on gardening please visit:

<https://extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture>

or call

University of Illinois Extension Knox County
309-342-5108



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Other information brochures can be found online at <https://extension.illinois.edu/hkmw/gardening-and-nature-brochures>

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Houseplants



Garden Tips
from
**Knox County
Master Gardeners**

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Extension

Houseplants provide color and interest during cold and bleak winter months. The key is making sure growing conditions are understood and plants are provided what they need to ensure health and longevity. Growing indoors also allows you to grow tropical plants that would otherwise not survive in our growing zone during the winter months, bringing them indoors in the winter and outdoors in the summer. Below are some considerations for growing plants indoors.

Indoor Growing Conditions

One thing to consider prior to purchasing plants or bringing outdoor plants inside are the indoor growing conditions. Just as is needed in outdoor gardening, available light is an important factor that needs to be determined. Other factors to consider are indoor temperature and humidity.

Lighting

Indoor lighting situations for plants can usually be broken down into three categories: low, medium, and high light. Light intensity will affect what type of plants do well in various indoor locations. Below are basic explanations of each.

Low Light – North facing windows or artificial room lighting

Medium Light—East or West facing windows

High Light—South facing windows

Light intensity in these situations can be affected by other factors. A south facing window might offer less light

intensity if a tree were shading that part of the house or the roof had an overhang.

When choosing a location for houseplants make sure that plants are not placed directly against windows. In winter the plant can be damaged by cold, and in summer the plant can be scorched by heat. It is also best to rotate or turn plants to allow light to reach various portions of the plant to promote even growth on all sides. The best method to remember to turn plants is to rotate a quarter turn each time they are watered.

Temperature

Indoor temperature is also a consideration when deciding on houseplants. Most houseplants have similar preferences for best performance and growth. Typically, houseplants prefer daytime temperatures below 80 and nighttime temperatures between 60 and 75. It is best to research the temperature and light requirements of all houseplants before making a final decision about which one to bring home. Also, avoid placing plants where they will be subject to hot or cold drafts, such as near heating or cooling sources or doors leading to the outside.

Humidity

Humidity also plays a role in how plants will perform indoors. Summer provides higher levels of humidity, but during the winter when the furnace is running, humidity levels often drop. This can be detrimental for houseplants. Make sure to offer additional humidity during the winter through use of a humidifier, clustering plants together, or providing shallow trays of water near plants. A method to address the need for

additional humidity is to place the plant in a tray with pebbles. After watering, the tray will collect the excess water which will evaporate increasing humidity. Misting plants can also help to increase humidity.

Day to Day Maintenance

Watering

All plants need water. How often or how much will depend on the plant, soil, and growing conditions. Some plants like soil that is more moist while others prefer dryer soil. As an example, Peace Lilies love really wet soil and don't like to dry out, whereas Kalanchoe prefer dryer soil and the soil should actually dry out a few inches before watering.

Make sure to check the soil every few days to once a week and water as necessary. Allow the water to drain out the bottom of the pot to help flush out any excess salt buildup in the soil which can cause root burn. It is best to not let plants sit in water to help prevent root rot. Using a tray with pebbles as mentioned above will keep pots from sitting in water.

Fertilizing

Fertilizing houseplants should only be done when the plant is actively growing. It will not compensate for poor growing conditions and could actually make the situation worse. The best method for fertilizing is to use a water soluble fertilizer between March and September according to package directions. Do not fertilize in winter months as plants are slower