



Caring For Indoor Plants



About:

Indoor plants are generally tropical plants that enjoy the amount of light, moisture and temperatures similar to their native environment. The key to growing them successfully is to select a plant that grows naturally in an environment similar to the conditions of your room.

Light:

There are generally three different light requirements; low, medium, and High.

Low Light Plants:

These plants will do well in the interior of a room, under fluorescent lights, or in a northern exposure window. To use a rule of thumb to help determine the light sufficiency; if you can read a book comfortably in that location without turning on a light, a low light plant will grow there. If you have to turn on a light, more light is needed.

Medium Light Plants:

This group of plants will perform well in bright eastern exposures, or 5'-6' from full western or southern exposures.

High Light Plants:

The last plant group needs four to six hours of direct sunlight daily. Southern or western exposures are ideal. Be sure to check the plants for water, insects and heat burn regularly.

Like everything quality is just as important as quantity. Natural daylight is the standard of plant light quality. Artificial lighting can be added to improve the quantity. When growing plants indoors, full spectrum fluorescent lights should be close to the plants and be turned on at least 8 hours every day.

Temperature:

Most houseplants do well in normal home temperatures - 60 to 80 degrees F. Some tropical plants cannot survive any length of time below 55 degrees (Dieffenbachia, Spathiphyllum, Aglaonema.) However, some plants we grow indoors can tolerate a drop in temperatures, and may require a chilling period to set flowers buds (Clivia, Amaryllis, some Orchids.)

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Water:

The amount of water a plant needs is dependent on the amount of light, and how pot bound the plants are. The greater of these two situations, the greater the amount of water needed. Keep in mind the seasonal changes. Plants will need more water in the summer months than in the winter months.

Most plants benefit from allowing the soil to dry somewhat between watering. If the soil in the pot is wet, the plant does not need watering. While some plants need to dry out quite thoroughly at times (cacti and succulents) most plants can be watered when the upper portion of the soil is dry. Certain plants (palms, orchids, ferns, cycads, and bromeliads) appreciate water on their foliage or high humidity to do well.

Repotting:

Choose a pot with drainage holes and use a good quality, bagged potting medium that is suited for the type of plant you are repotting. Be sure to loosen and trim the roots so they get started. Increase the pot size a little at a time. For instance, repot a well-rooted 4-inch plant into a 6-inch pot, a 6-inch plant into an 8-inch pot, etc. The plant will grow best once the roots fill the pot.

Fertilizer:

Use a complete fertilizer with trace elements to assure your plant has what it needs to grow and be healthy. Fertilize more when the plant is actively growing, less when growth is slow. For many, though not all, plants in the Willamette Valley growth tends to be much slower from sometime in November until sometime in April or May, unless the plant is under bright grow lights.

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