

Cultivating Your Green Thumb...Indoors

Why do we grow plants indoors?

Plants remove VOC's or volatile organic chemicals by doing what they naturally do - photosynthesizing. Plants improve our moods, bring down our blood pressure and increase employee productivity in the workplace.

Some of the best plants to use:

Pothos *Epipremnum*, philodendron, areca palm *Dyopsis lutescens*, Boston Fern *Nephrolepis exaltata 'Bostoniensis'*, croton *Codiaeum sp.*, spider plant *Chlorophytum comosum*, rubber tree *Ficus elastica robusta*, dracaena, flamingo flower *Anthurium*, peace lily *Spathiphyllum*, ficus, english ivy *Hedera helix*

Top elements for growing houseplants successfully:

Growing media or soil- Choose a high-quality houseplant mix and then add 1/3 coarse perlite and 1/3 coarse vermiculite to 1/3 of the mix. I find houseplant mixes are too heavy, meaning they stay wet for longer than they should and need extra drainage material added.

Containers- Drainage hole is a MUST! Use a diamond tipped drill bit to drill a hole in almost any container.

Watering Practices- Do NOT water your plant on a schedule but do CHECK them on a schedule. Plants may not need water if there has been a week of cloudy cool days. Use your finger to check the soil.

Fertilizing- Fertilizer is vitamins for your plants. Fertilizer is NOT food for your plant and not a miracle cure for an ailing plant.

Lighting- Light is food for your plant. Determine how much light you have to offer a plant before purchasing one. Electric light can be used to supplement low light situations.

Atmosphere- Humidity is key, so use a pebble tray under your plants to raise the humidity. Fill a large saucer with pebbles and water and sit your plant on top of the pebbles, making sure your plant is not standing in water, and the water evaporation will keep the humidity high around your plant.

Grooming- Clean your plants! Put them in the shower or sink to give them a good cleaning. Dirt and dust on your leaves are blocking light, thus not allowing your plant to make food as efficiently as possible.

What can go wrong?

Pests: Houseplant pests can include; aphids, fungus gnats, mealybugs, scale, spider mites, and whiteflies.

Foliage and root problems: Powdery mildew, sooty mold, cold water damage, tip burn, fluoride toxicity, fungal leaf spots, and root rot.

Fixing the problem

Always try the least invasive and nontoxic way first. This could include simply washing your plant, using alcohol, or removing infected parts of the plant. If these prove unsuccessful, then the decision has to be made to use insecticides and fungicides or throw the plant out. (It's okay. We learn from our failures.)

Growing houseplants is fun! With just a little TLC, you can have beautiful, air-cleaning, happiness producing, green plants!

Lisa Eldred Steinkopf

The Houseplant Guru

www.thehouseplantguru.com



Houseplants The Complete Guide to Choosing, Growing, and Caring for Indoor Plants Cool Springs Press 2017

Grow In the Dark How to Choose and Care for Low-Light Houseplants Cool Springs Press 2019

