

# Houseplants



## Enchanted Forest Nursery & Stone

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## **TROUBLE SHOOTING**

**RAPID DEFOLIATION** can be caused by extreme changes in temperature, changes in light intensity, overwatering, underwatering, or exposure to the cold.

**GRADUAL DEFOLIATION** (lower leaves yellow and fall) can be caused by overwatering (root loss), underwatering (lack of water to support full foliage), lack of sufficient light, or lack of fertilizer.

**NEW GROWTH WILTED, BURNED, OR BLACKENED** can be caused by too much fertilizer, cold drafts, hot drafts, lack of water, sunburn, excess heat, or damage from freezing.

**WILTING OF THE ENTIRE PLANT** can be caused by lack of water, too much water (roots rotted away), too much fertilizer (roots burned), or damage from cold temperatures.

**SPOTTED FOLIAGE** can be caused by overwatering, over exposure to the sun, or bacterial or fungal infection.

**BROWNING LEAF TIPS** can be caused by low humidity, excess fertilizer, or hard water.

**COTTONY MASSES ON STEMS AND LEAVES** are caused by mealybugs. These insects often leave a sticky residue on leaves.

**ROUND OR OVAL SHAPED BUMPS ON STEMS OR LEAVES** are scales. These insects leave a sticky residue on leaves or nearby tables and furniture.

**SMALL BLACK FLYING INSECTS** that seem impossible to eliminate are fungus gnats. They are harmless to plants, but annoying to humans.

## **LEARNING TO WATER**

The water needs of most houseplants are quite simple..

- 1) Don't wait until the plant wilts, as this is hard on the plant.
- 2) Do not let the plant sit in water. The soil will remain soggy causing the roots to rot.
- 3) Roots need air too, so be cautious not to keep plants too wet.

To check soil moisture insert your finger about an inch into the soil. Check plants weekly. As a general guideline if the soil feels dry, you need to water. However, some plants prefer the soil to stay more wet than others. Plants such as cactus only need water when the soil dries out.

Never allow watering to become a weekly "Saturday" routine. The frequency of watering will change with the season and the plant's growth. Most plants will only need to be watered every 7 to 10 days in winter, while in summer they are actively growing and may need watering once or twice a week.

## **FERTILIZING**

There are many types of fertilizers to be used, but the important aspect is when to fertilize. Feed the plant according to label directions when it is actively growing, which will most often begin in spring. As the plant begins to slow its growth in fall, begin to reduce the fertilizer applications to once a month.

Both water soluble (Peters®, Miracle-Gro®) and slow release fertilizers (Osmocote®) are effective.

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## **HUMIDITY**

Humidity refers to the moisture level of the air. Most plants need a more humid atmosphere. Low humidity can cause leaf tips to brown, buds and flowers to fall prematurely, and general decline of the plant.

Higher humidity can be achieved by occasional misting, grouping plants together, and setting plants in pebble trays.

Pebble trays hold excess water and allow it to gradually evaporate creating a small humid microclimate. Ferns and Norfolk Island Pine are the most common houseplants that prefer high humidity.

## **LIGHTING**

Most plants like bright light in the home.. Be cautious of plants in direct light as they may dry out quicker from being in the sun. When situating plants, consider the outdoor landscape.

A large tree may shade south window making it bright light in summer and direct light in winter.

Every plant has specific requirements, and are best placed by light requirements rather than how the plant looks in the spot.

## **REPOTTING**

Repotting is the topic of much speculation and myth. Most houseplants do not mind being root bound, and some actually won't flower unless they are. Houseplants in general should be repotted about once every two or three years.

Increase the pot size by no more than two (2) inches. Putting the plant in a larger pot does not promote faster growth.

Infact, the excess soil only holds water, resulting in root rot.

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## **TEMPERATURE**

Houseplants are tropicals and they like warm temperatures. Most houseplants will tolerate temperatures that range from 55°F to 75°F; however, they do not appreciate rapid temperature fluctuations. Heating and air conditioning vents can rapidly dry out or burn foliage, so be aware of this when placing plants around the house. Drafts from windows and opening doors in winter can also damage plants

When bringing houseplants outdoors during cool temperatures, be sure to enclose them in a paper or plastic bag. Even short periods of cold (40°F or below) can damage buds, leaves and stems.

## **Flowering Plants**

These plants offer great color for a couple weeks to a month or more. Most should be considered temporary houseplants since it is difficult to get them to reflower as well as if grown in greenhouse conditions. Mums, forced spring bulbs, cineraria, poinsettia, and kalanchoe are examples of short lived flowering house plants.

Peace Lily, lipstick plant, goldfish plant, Easter or Christmas cactus, cyclamen, and African violet are some plants that do reliably reflower.

## **HOUSEPLANTS FOR LOW LIGHT**

Cast Iron Plant  
Kentia Palm  
Spider Plant  
Grape Ivy  
False Aralia  
Pothos  
English Ivy  
Aglonema  
Philodendron  
Swedish Ivy  
Peace Lily  
Wandering Jew  
Bird's nest fern  
Sanseveria

## **HOUSEPLANTS FOR HIGH LIGHT**

Cactus  
Hibiscus  
Bird of Paradise  
Lemon Trees  
Lime Trees  
Ficus  
Rubber Plant  
Ponytail Palm  
Norfolk Island Pine

Information for this brochure was adapted from  
The House Plant Expert, 1994.  
Dr. D.G. Hessayon.  
Expert Books, New York.