

HOUSEPLANT CARE GUIDE

LIGHT REQUIREMENTS

Typically, most houseplants like 12-14 hours of indirect sunlight, such as an east or west facing window. However, west facing windows get harsher, warmer afternoon light which can be considered high light. East facing windows get morning sun and are great indirect light source.

A southern facing window is best for high light houseplants, such as cactus and succulents. Therefore, a north facing window is best for low-light houseplants, such as ZZ plants and sansevieria.

During winter months a north facing light source is an ideal space for dormant blooming houseplants (in 50°-60°).

Rotate your houseplant periodically to balance light exposure to all sides of the plant throughout the year.

Also remember that some plants can be sensitive to a photoperiod which is the shortening and lengthening of days due to seasonal changes. Typically, this affects the budding of plants, such as Christmas Cactus, Kalanchoes, and Poinsettias.

Consider the distance the plant is from your light source as well as the size of the windows and any outdoor seasonal changes that may affect the light your plant is receiving throughout the year.

When moving a plant from a low light to a high light be sure to acclimatize the plant for a 2 – 3-week period, so it has time to adjust to the brighter rays and avoid leaf scorch.

Artificial Light: Incandescent lights provide soft, warm light on a red spectrum and are often ineffective in lighting most houseplants. Fluorescent lights provide cooler green – blue rays that can be enough light for most houseplants.

WATERING

Water needs can vary greatly among houseplants, but most houseplants need light to moderate water and good drainage.

There are factors that can affect the frequency of water as well, such as air flow, light, and temperature.

Typically, people tend to overwater, which can create root rot. Make sure the plant isn't sitting in stagnate water in its saucer. Yellowing, soft, sometimes curling leaves that begin to drop from the plant are a sign of overwatering. Other signs of overwatering are fungus gnats, fungus, and or darkening roots.

Signs of under-watering are wilting and/or yellowing in leaves and stems, dry soil, and in severe drought leaves drop and/or become crispy.

Water meters can be helpful in determining when to water, but it is important to know the plants' moisture needs. For example, succulents like to dry out between watering, while tropical plants like caladiums need continuous moisture.

TEMPERATURE

Most houseplants thrive in 65° to 75° degrees. Some houseplants may need a dormancy period and will need a few months of temperatures of 50°-60°.

FERTILIZER

When plants are actively growing it is best to fertilize them with a balanced fertilizer 1-2 times a month (look for ratios of 20-20-20 chemical or 7-7-7 organic). Fertilize when plants are moist, so you do not burn the roots. Typically, most houseplants do not need fertilizer in the winter months of November – February.

SOIL

A general potting soil will work best for most all houseplants. African Violets, Streptocarpus, and Gloxinias like more peat heavy mixtures, where as cactus and succulent varieties like more of a perlite and/or sand mixture for aeration and drainage.

It is helpful to have a storage bin of perlite, peat moss, and potting soil on hand if you plan to grow houseplants regularly, as this will be helpful for repotting.

REPOTTING

Most houseplants need to be repotted every 2-3 years, as salts will build over time in the soil due to fertilizer use, leeching needed nutrients. Also, plants may become root bound over time and will outgrow their pot and need to be potted in a larger pot. Repotting promotes soil health and root development that will help your plant thrive over time.

When repotting evaluate whether you need a larger size pot or if you can divide or simply repot the plant. If the roots are tightly bound together, pull them apart or if it demands, use a knife or scissors cut them apart. This will encourage new root development. Also, cut out any browning or soft, mushy roots.

Select a pot with proper drainage. You can use gravel, rocks, broken terra cotta pieces in the bottom of your container (this is especially helpful if the pot is heavy and needs to be moved often), but it is not necessary.

Use new potting soil and a clean container, and fill the bottom of the pot with a quarter or so of soil then place the plant in your container. Next, tuck soil in around the plant and fill the pot with soil nearly to the top of the pot, but leave a half inch to an inch space from the lip of the pot to the soil line. This will act as a reservoir when watering and prevent soil from pouring over the pot.

Give your plant a chance to establish their roots before fertilizing, about 2-3 weeks.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

[The Complete Houseplant Survival Manual](#) by Barbara Pleasant

[The Indestructible Houseplant](#) by Tovah Martin

