

Indoor Plant Care

Indoor plants are typically tropical plants, enjoying the light, moisture and temperatures similar to their native environment. The key to growing them is to select a plant that grows naturally in an environment that is similar to your room's interior. The following care guide is designed to assist you in determining how to select plants for your indoor environment and how to care for them.

Low-light plants do well in northern exposures and in the interior of a room. Use our rule thumb to determine the sufficiency of natural light for these plants...if you can read a book comfortably in that location without turning on a light, a low-light plant will grow there. If you cannot, then additional light is required.

Medium-light plants grow well in bright eastern exposures or five to six feet from full western or southern exposures. Most low-light plants thrive in medium-light areas, but medium-light plants grow poorly in low-light areas.

High-light plants need four to six hours daily of direct sunlight. Unobstructed southern or western exposures are ideal. As this high light can be stressful for many plants, check them regularly for water needs, insects and heat burn.

Plant health depends on quality as well as quantity of light. Natural daylight is necessary for light quality and can be supplemented with fluorescent light to increase light quantity. When growing indoor plants under artificial light, the light source needs to be close to the plant and turned on 12 to 16 hours every day. Timers work well for artificial lights.

Water: Plants use water in relation to the amount of light they receive and how pot-bound they are. The greater the light (keep in mind seasonal light changes) and the more pot-bound a plant is, the more rapidly the plant uses water.

It is recommended watering plants when the soil is dry to the touch below the soil's surface. Place your finger into the soil to feel the soil moisture. When the soil feels slightly dry or does not cling to your finger, it is time to water. Add water to fill the pot until it flows out the drain holes. Discard the extra water that drains out. It's good to use filtered water if possible so that salts don't build up in the soil.

Over-watering occurs when the soil is not allowed to dry slightly between watering. This constant dampness causes the root system to rot. Evidence of over-watering is the yellowing of leaves and brown root tips. Roots submerged in the water of a saucer will also rot.

Under-watering, or withholding water when the soil has become dry, causes the root system to dry up. Many plants wilt when they are too dry. Yet other plants show little or no symptoms until the root system has dried past the point of no return. The safest practice is to water when the soil is slightly dry.

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Fertilizer: We recommend fertilizing indoor plants during the months they are actively growing – March through October. Any balanced fertilizer containing micronutrients may be used. Follow the label directions for frequency and dilution. Remember to wet the soil prior to adding fertilizer so that it does not burn the roots. We do not recommend slow-release fertilizers for indoor plants since our light intensity is not high enough for the plants to use this fertilizer well.

If your plant is not healthy, do not fertilize. Poor plant health is usually a symptom of other problems that are only compounded by fertilizer.

Humidity and Temperature: Because they are tropical, our indoor plants enjoy the warm temperatures of room interiors. Unfortunately, they often suffer from a lack of humidity. You can increase humidity by using room humidifiers, pebble trays or by grouping plants together. Pebble trays are very effective sources of humidity. Simply fill a deep, oversized saucer with pebbles. Place your plant on top of the pebbles, and then fill the saucer with water until it almost touches the bottom of your plant's pot as the water evaporates from the pebble tray, humidity surrounds the plant. Add water to the pebbles as needed.

Pests: Insect problems can often be prevented by regular washing of leaves and stems with a mild soap solution. If you suspect an insect infestation, bring in the plant or a sample of the plant and receive insect information and insect control methods. One teaspoon of Dawn liquid soap to a gal. of water works well because it is biodegradable and safe.