

Massachusetts Master Gardener Association

FACT SHEET



Have Gardening Questions? The **Master Gardener Help Line Hours** are 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. on Fridays (all year) as well as Wednesdays (March-November) and Mondays (April-October).
Phone: 617-933-4929 Email: mghelpline@masshort.org.

Houseplant Care and Suggestions

The beauty of indoor houseplants is that no matter what part of the country you live in, you can create an oasis of color, shape and texture that will brighten your home, fight the winter blahs and lift your spirits throughout the year. In addition to their visual appeal, houseplants also improve indoor air quality.

One of the first things to consider when you buy houseplants is how much light they will receive at different times of the year. If the light in your region changes drastically from season to season, some flowering houseplants may need to be moved around as needed. The first step is to determine what light conditions you have so you can select plants accordingly.

Low light – These houseplants thrive in bright indirect light, but many will tolerate a small amount of light from such sources such as a north-facing window or a dark shady corner across from windows.

Aglaonema species – Chinese evergreen
Calatha hybrids
Epipremnum aureum – pothos or devil's ivy
Sansevieria cultivars – mother-in-law's tongue or snake plant
Spathiphyllum cultivars – peace lily

Medium light – These houseplants need to receive bright indirect light for most of the day. East- and north-facing windows are good locations for these indoor plants.

Caryota mitis – Fishtail palm
Diffenbachia hybrids – dumb cane
Dracaena spikes
Ivies – assorted
Philodendron selloum – big leaf philodendron

High light – For these indoor houseplants, several hours of

direct sun and bright indirect light for the rest of the day is ideal. Place them in front of south- and west-facing windows.

Beaucarnea recurvata – pony tail palm
Bromeliads
Cacti and succulents
Phalenopsis hybrids – moth orchid
Santpaulia velutina – African violets

House Plant Care

Watering – Water houseplants when the soil is dry to the touch. Saturate the root ball thoroughly until the water runs out holes in the bottom of the pot. Wait a few minutes and then empty the saucer. Don't let plants stand in pooled water.

Fertilizer – If you use a soil mix without fertilizer, fertilize with a liquid such as 10-10-10 once a month during the growing season. Do not fertilize during the winter months.

Temperature – A general rule is to keep night temperatures 5 to 10 degrees cooler than daytime temperatures. Keep plants away from cold drafts. Close blinds or curtains at night to protect the area between the glass and the plants.

Humidity – The dryness that often comes with indoor heat can be a problem in winter. To restore humidity, mist plants or set them on trays of pebbles with water. Note that some hairy-leaved houseplants such as African violets and gloxinias do not like wet leaves.

Pest control – To reduce insect problems, groom plants regularly by removing dead leaves and flowers. Clean leaves with a damp cloth or place smaller plants in the shower and rinse them.

Potting – The best time to repot your houseplants is in early spring, just before they begin to put out new growth. Use pots with drainage holes and place them in decorative indoor plant pots.

The Massachusetts Master Gardener Association is a non-profit organization whose mission is to share knowledge and experience with the public through outreach programs in education, horticulture and gardening; to provide the Master Gardener Training Program to interested members of the public; and to provide graduates of the Master Gardener Training Program with educational and practical opportunities to extend their knowledge and interests in gardening and related topics. <http://www.massmastergardeners.org/>