

## Houseplant Care Tips

Many of us enjoy having houseplants in our homes and plants make wonderful gifts to give. Perhaps you received one recently as a gift. Hopefully the plant was wrapped well and not exposed to cold outdoor weather very long. The plant should have plant care information with it for you to follow. Please keep in mind the new plant may go through a bit of shock as it may have just left a green house that has a much higher humidity and temperature than our homes in the winter. For the first few weeks it may require a bit more watering and possibly even giving it a mist of water will help it recover.

Houseplants are beneficial to us, they recycle carbon dioxide into oxygen, and some plants also help cleanse the air and add some humidity. Also having a plant can even give some emotional and mental benefits.

If you have some houseplants, they may do better if repotted. I suggest spreading newspaper or an old shower curtain over your workspace before starting. When repotting, purchase a good potting soil that is appropriate for your type of plant. The new pot should have drainage holes and not be more than 2 inches diameter larger than the pot it has been in. A little tip when I do repotting I wait until the soil is fairly dry and shake the plant from the pot, then I carefully remove some of the old soil from the roots. To keep from making a mess of soil running out the drainage hole when watering put a coffee filter, several layers of newspaper or a piece of landscape fabric over the holes. Water can still filter through but holds the soil in. Sprinkle some potting soil on the bottom and put the root part of the plant in trying to spread the roots a bit. Continue to pot soil around the plant at the same level the soil was on the stem. Leave a half to one inch of soil from the top so water doesn't run out the top. Keep in mind there are some plants like Christmas cactus, aloe, many cacti and jade plants actually prefer to be "pot bound" and do not need to be put in a larger pot.

Watering is probably one of the biggest problems people may have. Actually overwatering is the number one killer of houseplants, especially the very popular succulents. Water when the top of the soil is dry to the touch and do not allow the plant to sit in water in the saucer. When watering tap water is fine, but do

not to use fluorinated water. Plants prefer water to be above 60 degrees, so letting water set out to reach room temperature may be best. When using a water soluble fertilizer follow the directions, never use too much fertilizer it can “burn” the plant.

Here are some problems you may have noticed with your plants.

- If the tip or edges of the leaves turn brown the problem may be: Humidity too low, too much fertilizer, potting mix may be getting to dry between watering or possibly too much fluoride in the water.
- If the leaves turn yellow the problem may be: Overwatering, lack of fertilizer, drafts of either too hot or too cold air. Note, lower leaves on older plants may turn yellow due to age.
- If the leaves on your plant are very small the problem may be: Lack of fertilizer or too low of light.
- If the leaves have brown dead spots: Cold water may have splashed on them or it could be sunburn if it is a plant that prefers lower light.
- If the growth of your plant is “leggy” it may be caused by too low of light or too much fertilizer.
- If the plant just does not seem to grow, it is probably been kept too cool or in too low of light.
- If it is a flowering plant and the buds keep falling off the problem may be: Drafts of too hot or too cold air, humidity too low, room is too hot, potting mix allowed to dry out too much or the plant may have been moved around too much. If it never flowers the problem may be too low light or too much fertilizer.
- If the plant wilts easily, the problem may be the room is too hot and humidity is too low and the container it is in is too small.

I hope some of this information will help you with your houseplants. Keep planting! Kris Winkler