

CARING FOR YOUR HOUSEPLANTS

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO GARDENING



INTRODUCTION

There are many benefits to houseplants, whether for aesthetics or simply wanting to try your hand at gardening while having limited to no garden space. Houseplants are a great beginning step in your gardening journey and cultivating your green thumb. Not only are they great for brightening up the place, but they also have many other benefits, too. For example:

- Houseplants can aid in purifying the air around a home. As with all plants, houseplants will take in carbon dioxide and produce oxygen, so they can definitely help to improve the air quality around the house.
- Believe it or not, there are many reports that state that incorporating indoor plants into your home will help to reduce stress and improve your mental well-being overall. Whether this is due to the aesthetically pleasing appearance of houseplants or the improved air quality, is unknown - but they have been found to lower stress levels which will help everyone out around the house.



HOUSEPLANT CARE

Caring for houseplants can actually be very simple, particularly when choosing a nice starter houseplant which is low maintenance. As with all plants, there are three main points to consider when caring for your houseplants. These are:

- Location - where are you going to keep your houseplant to keep it thriving?
- Water - how often do you need to water your houseplant to keep it happy?
- Food - what should you fertilise your houseplant with and how often?

Location

When choosing a location for your indoor plants, it is beneficial to think of not just the lighting levels but also the temperature and airflow. A lot of houseplants like bright indirect light as too much direct light can cause burns to the tips of the leaves.

Houseplants are often tropical by nature and so love warmth and humidity as well as this bright indirect sunlight. Ensure that you keep houseplants away from a radiator as this type of heat will be too drying and can cause the leaves to dry out and shrivel.



Watering

Most houseplants will like more infrequent, deep watering rather than light, daily watering. The best way to gauge how often to water your houseplants is to test the first two inches of the soil - when these first two inches are dry to the touch, this is a good indicator to water your plant. Different varieties of houseplants will vary on their watering needs, but as a good rule of thumb, once a week or once every two weeks is a good margin. As well as just watering your house plants once a week or once every two, it is a good idea to mist them to create a more humid environment which will allow them to thrive as if in a rainforest or humid jungle - the more tropical, the better!



Food

Food is just as important as water and location for houseplants, one of the best ways to keep on top of this is by checking the nutrient requirements for your specific houseplants. Most houseplants, though, will appreciate a well-balanced, 20-20-20 mixed feed to be added during their active growing periods. This will usually fall between late spring and early autumn. Another good way to give them a boost right away when repotting or planting out is to add a specific houseplant compost or one tailored to the type of houseplant that you have chosen.

REPOTTING HOUSEPLANTS

We generally advise repotting your plants on arrival to give them the best foundation for establishment on receipt after transit. After this, young houseplants will need repotting once a year as a general rule of thumb and more mature specimens will only need repotting when they begin to outgrow their original pot. Some houseplants will grow quicker than others and will need repotting more often. Always ensure that your new pot has adequate drainage and will have enough room for the rootball to continue to grow.



CLEANING HOUSEPLANTS

It may seem odd to need to clean a growing, living plant, but with the high-humidity requirements of a lot of houseplants, this can be crucial to keep them in good order. With such moist and humid conditions, your houseplant will thrive but so can mould and other pests and fungi. As such, it is good practice to wipe down the leaves and stems of your houseplants with a soft, dry cloth once a month to prevent unsightly diseases or pests from lurking in amongst the lush, green foliage that houseplants are renowned for.

While you're doing this, it is the perfect time to check for the beginning signs of pest and disease infestations like mildew or spider mites which like to target houseplants.



HOUSEPLANT PESTS

Just like any other plant you may have, houseplants can be affected by pests and diseases; when you're growing and keeping plants indoors, it can be even more important to keep these in check, as no one wants to be harbouring an infestation in their living space!



Powdery Mildew

As previously mentioned in this course, one of the most notorious houseplant diseases is powdery mildew, a white powdery fungus which thrives in humid conditions. It can be easily identified by the white, powdery spores present on and among the leaves and stems of your houseplants. This is one of the reasons that it is beneficial to wipe down your houseplants once a month. If you notice any mildew growing, there's no need to panic as this can be easily remedied. Mildew will not generally cause too many issues with growth and vigour unless left untreated for a longer period of time.

One of the best ways to control and stop a mildew attack on your plants is to wipe them down with a soapy water solution or with a widely sold fungicide - most garden centres and home DIY shops will sell them.

Spider Mites

Identifying an infestation or the early stages of an infestation is the first way to control and stop spider mites in their tracks. These will look like small specs on the underside of the leaves or on the stems of the plant. The good news about that is that this is an early stage of the infestation and so it will be much more manageable to rid your houseplants of these spider mites than down the line in a late stage of infestation. Sometimes you may be able to see the spider mites suspended in their webbing.

One of the best ways to prevent spider mites is to up the humidity and regularly mist your plants, keeping them well hydrated. If you do notice that there are already spider mites inhabiting your indoor plants, then the best way to get rid of them is to give your plants a shower - this can be done by actually bringing the plants to the shower and giving them a good watering in the process, or by misting. Other ways to get rid of spider mites include: peppermint, garlic or rosemary mixed with water or a soapy solution, one tablespoon of soap per litre of water will work well.



TIPS

- Ensure not to overwater your houseplants, as this can cause root rot and other issues like wilting.
- Check your houseplants frequently, wipe them down and inspect the underside of the leaves and the stems in particular.
- Keep your houseplants away from radiators, as this will speed up their water absorption and they can lose too much water through the leaves, resulting in crispy, brown leaves - also keep them out of direct sunlight for this reason!

