

## WINTER HOUSEPLANT CARE



Indoor Plants are typically tropical plants that require growing conditions similar to their native environment. There are some special considerations for keeping your indoor plants healthy and happy during cold weather.

### **Light & Temperature:**

Put houseplants in the sunniest spot you have - move them to follow the sun if necessary. Consider adding a full-spectrum fluorescent lamp as a supplement. Indoor plants usually like warmer temperatures, so if you feel comfortable, they'll probably feel comfortable, too (generally 60°-75°F). Most varieties appreciate a slight 10° drop at night to mimic their native conditions. Keep away from drafts, doorways, heat registers and cold glass windows.

**Water & Humidity:** *The amount of water that a plant needs is determined by the type of plant, amount of light they receive, warmth of the room, type of soil and pot size.*

Most plants go semi-dormant in winter, especially if they've spent the summer outdoors, and do not need to be watered as much or as frequently. A good rule of thumb is to water the plant slowly with room temperature water when the soil is dry to the touch a few inches below the surface. ( You can use a wooden chopstick to test dampness 3/4 of the way down deeper containers.) Discard any excess water in the saucer.

While plants may not need as much water in the winter, they do need more humidity. Indoor air is very dry from your heating system. Increase humidity with water-filled pebble trays or by grouping plants together. Misting is only a temporary blast of moisture - avoid spraying foliage of fuzzy-leaved plants like African Violets. Wipe down large leaves with a damp paper towel.

**Fertilizer:** Fertilizing is not necessary until the plant's active growth stage, usually March through October, using a complete water-soluble fertilizer, preferably organic. "Complete" means that the fertilizer contains micro nutrients as well as nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. Different plants may have different fertilizer needs.

**Keep plants clean:** Dust and debris prevents plants from breathing freely, clogging their little pores called stomata. A dust-covered leaf surface will not get the full effect of sunlight and photosynthesis will be slowed.

**Bugs:** Spider mites and mealybugs make an appearance when the heat is turned up. Inspect the foliage (top and bottom) and along the stems for signs of bugs.