

Popular and Recommended Houseplants

Selection, Diseases, Pests and Recommended Species




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Selection Criteria


- Match the plant's needs to the environment you have currently
- Match plant needs to your time to care for the plant
- Keep in mind safety considerations for pets and children



Pet-happy.com

Presentation Overview


- Selection Criteria
- Houseplant Diseases
- Houseplant Insect Management
- Popular and Recommended Houseplants: A Small Selection



Common Diseases

Root Rot


- Symptoms include the soil staying wet, yellowing, wilting leaves, stunting, and soft, brown bad-smelling roots
- Many soil-borne fungi cause root rot
- Best to discard the plant



Common Diseases

Powdery Mildew

- Begonia, Kalanchoe and rosemary are especially susceptible
- Try reducing humidity and increasing air flow
- Can use 1 1/2 TBS baking soda & 3 TBS horticultural oil in 1 gallon of water
- Fungicides containing myclobutanil, and labeled for use on houseplants may help





Insect Pests

- Mealybugs
- Aphids
- Thrips
- Spider mites
- Whiteflies
- Scales
- Fungus gnats
- Springtails

Insect Pests


- Exclusion
 - Quarantine new plants for at least two weeks
 - Bringing plants indoors in fall
 - Check drainage holes,
 - Check under leaves
 - Water wash, esp. under leaves
 - Spray with insecticide if needed

Insect Pests

A word about the use of pesticides on houseplants

- Must be labeled for use on indoor plants
- Must list the pest on the label as being controlled by the product
- Must use the product in a manner consistent with the label
- Best used in a garage or somewhere well-ventilated
- For sprays, bag the plant and be sure to spray under leaves



Mealybugs

- Mealybugs can infest all plant parts, including the roots.
- They produce a waxy coating on their bodies and their egg masses that resist insecticides.
- If the infestation is light, use Q-tips™ dipped in rubbing alcohol – lightly touch it to the insect or egg mass – don't rub it over the whole leaf
- Sprays labeled for houseplants and mealybugs with active ingredients bifenthrin, permethrin or resmethrin.
- Neem oil





Photo credit: Getbusygardening.com




Aphids

- Aphids are soft-bodied, sucking insects that feed on plant sap—Cornicles exude honeydew
- Gregarious, sexual and parthenogenetic reproduction
- Can be controlled on houseplants with insecticidal soap & forceful water sprays
- Products with bifenthrin, permethrin or resmethrin or use neem oil







Thrips

- Thrips are 1/16" long
- They hide in flower & leaf buds, and are hard to find.
- Very mobile and fast
- Thrips cause feeding damage and vector plant viruses.
- Washing, insecticidal soap, neem oil
- Traditional products include active ingredients bifenthrin, permethrin, pyrethrins,
- Multiple treatments every 5-7 days are likely to be needed


Spider mites

- Spider mites are oval and yellowish. They are very tiny, only 1/50th" long, salt-grain size.
- They feed under leaves, sucking plant sap, causing stippling or bronzing of leaves.
- Populations increase rapidly.
- Discard the plant or use products with bifenthrin or insecticidal soap.

Spider mites



- Spider mite populations increase rapidly
- Do well in lower humidity conditions
- Study of the effect of temperature on spider mite reproduction rate
 - One month @ 60°F: 20 mites from 1 female
 - One month @ 70°F: 12,000 mites from 1 female
 - One month @ 80°F: 13,000,000 mites from 1 female




Planetnatural.com

Whiteflies

- Whiteflies have piercing/sucking mouthparts.
- They feed & lay eggs on the underside of leaves.
- Washing, bifenthrin, permethrin, at least three applications sprayed once every 5 days.
- Neem oil.






An adult whitefly.





Scales

- Often on ferns, orchids, schefflera, zebra plant, weeping fig and ivy
- Have hard shells that repel insecticides
- Found under leaves on leaf veins and petioles
- Wash plants, scrape off scales or use sprays with bifenthrin, permethrin or resmethrin.



Fungus Gnats

- Often mistaken for fruit flies
- Larvae live in soil and eat organic matter
- Unless large populations build up, they do little damage to plants
- Can use the 'potato slice' method to get rid of them
- Also can let soil dry out more between waterings and replace top inch of soil

Springtails

- Springtails are scavengers that eat decaying organic matter in soil. Rarely damage plants
- Named for forked 'furcula' that allows them to jump
- Like damp places
- Let soil dry as much as possible between waterings to get rid of springtails.






Springtails.

African Violet


Saintpaulia ionantha, Gesneriaceae

- The African violet was first discovered in East Africa in 1892 by Baron Walter von St. Paul.
- Best under grow lights or east, or open north side window
- Highly organic soil
- Propagate by leaf cuttings in spring
- Mealy bugs, powdery mildew, cyclamen mite and stem or crown rot can be problems.

Alocasia, Amazon Lily
Alocasia x Amazonica, Araceae

- From southern Asia, throughout South Pacific
- Propagate by division
- Some cultivars get very large
- Calcium oxalate crystals -- caution
- Low to medium light
- Medium humidity
- Very sensitive to temperatures below 55°F



Aloe
Aloe vera, Liliaceae (Asphodelaceae)

- From Africa
- Native environment is maritime sands and rocks
- Medium to high light levels needed
- Average home humidity is ok
- Propagates by offsets
- Few problems
- Do NOT over-water or over-fertilize








Photo credit: todayshomeowner.com

Aluminum Plant
Pilea cadieri, Urticaceae

- From Vietnam
- Perennial where native
- Medium to bright indirect light --loses variegation if light level is too low
- Best in high humidity--use pebble tray
- Good in tall terrariums
- Soil should not be too wet--rots easily
- Perennial where native
- Pinch to keep bushy and propagate via cuttings



Aspca.com



Guidetohouseplants.com


Baby's Tears
Soleirolia soleirolii, Urticaceae

- Islands in the Western Mediterranean such as Corsica and Sardinia
- Often used in fairy gardens and terrariums
- Moist soil
- Best in high humidity
- Bright indirect light
- Perennial where native
- Propagate via cuttings or division







Bird's nest fern
Asplenium nidus, Aspleniaceae

- From India, Japan, Australia
- An epiphyte in nature
- Low to medium light
- Medium humidity
- Medium soil moisture
- Water at base
- Scale an occasional problem
- Propagate via spores



Calathea
Calathea spp., Marantaceae


- From Brazil and tropical America
- Need low light (north or east window) and high humidity
- Can use a pebble tray for humidity
- Keep moist, but not too wet; will rot
- Don't allow temperatures to go below 55°F
- Don't like drafts
- Spider mites a problem -- insects like to hide in unfurled leaves
- Propagate by division

otoolesgardencenters.com

Chinese Evergreen
Aglaonema commutatum, Araceae

- From tropical Asia and Africa
- Low light, good in office settings
- Good for air cleaning
- Low humidity ok
- Propagate by division or air-layering if canes are well-developed
- Flower and fruit when older
- Few problems




Croton
Codiaeum variegatum pictum, Euphorbiaceae

- Pacific Islands, Malaysia, Northern Australia
- High direct light to maintain variegation
- Best in high humidity, use pebble tray
- Poisonous sap, caution for children and pets
- Spider mites can be an issue
- Propagate via stem cuttings




Dracaena, Madagascar Dragon Tree
Dracaena marginata, Agavaceae

- From Mexico, Columbia, Brazil, Puerto Rico
- Calcium oxalate in all plant parts—caution for pets and young children
- Medium to high light,
- Low humidity ok but don't let get too dry
- Too much fertilizer causes marginal leaf burn
- Propagate by air layering or cane cuttings
- Few problems




Striped Dracaena
Dracaena deremensis 'Warneckii'
Dracaena deremensis 'Lemon-Lime'
Agavaceae

- From tropical Africa
- Leaves narrow, pointy
- Good for air cleaning
- Medium light, will take fluorescent office setting
- Medium moisture, medium humidity
- If they dry out leaf tips will turn brown; hard to keep this from happening
- Propagate by cane cuttings or air layering



English Ivy
Hedera helix, Araliaceae

- From Eurasia
- Many cultivars are available
- Is poisonous – caution for pets and young children
- Bright to medium light is best
- Do not keep too moist --rots
- Propagate via stem cuttings
- Spider mites a big pest
- Invasive plant on West Coast of U.S.




'Gold Child' greengatefarms.com

'Sweetheart' charliecook.com


Tropical Hibiscus
Hibiscus rosa-sinensis, Malvaceae

- From Asia and Pacific Islands; is Malaysia's national flower
- Needs LOTS of light
- Cut back when take indoors for winter or in early spring
- Medium humidity
- Medium water needs
- Spider mites, scale, aphids, white flies
- Fertility important



Jade Plant, Crassulaceae
Crassula ovata (C. argentea)


- From South Africa, Mozambique
- Bright to medium light
- Do not overwater
- Low humidity ok
- Leaf or stem cuttings
- Scale, mealybug
- Don't fertilize Oct-Feb., only sparingly at other times
- Flowering at maturity
- Tight roots preferred



peacetreefarm.com

Kalanchoe
Kalanchoe blossfeldiana
Crassulaceae


- From Madagascar
- Light levels medium or high to maintain flowering
- Many flower colors
- Fertilize every 3 weeks when in flower
- Keep on dry side
- Prefers cooler temps.
- Powdery mildew, mealybugs occasional problems
- Undemanding



lowigarden.com

Nerve plant
Fittonia albivenis, F. verschaffeltii, Acanthaceae


- From South America, (Peru) where it's a ground cover plant
- Doesn't like dry air or drafts
- Low light or grow lights
- Moist soil needed
- High humidity best; good for terrariums
- Propagate via stem cuttings



Gardensonline.com
rhs.uk.org


Peace Lily
Spathiphyllum wallisii, Araceae

- From Central America, Indonesia, and the Philippines
- Low to medium light—good for office settings
- Shiny foliage
- Best for air cleaning
- Propagate by division
- Prefers high humidity for best flower production




Peperomia
Peperomia spp., Piperaceae

- From Central America, northern South America, few in Africa
- Low to medium light—are understory rainforest plants
- Attractive and varied foliage types
- Many are epiphytes
- Medium humidity
- Don't overwater
- Cuttings don't root easily—use rooting hormone




Philodendron
Philodendron scandens oxycardium, Araceae

- From Mexico
- Low light to medium light
- Understory plant, uses adventitious roots to anchor itself to trees
- Poisonous—calcium oxalate crystals
- Propagate via stem cuttings
- Few problems




Philodendron 'Prince of Orange'
x Philodendron cannifolium, Araceae

- From South America – a hybrid species
- Bright indirect light
- Average moisture
- Calcium oxalate in all parts of the plant
- Flowers at all times of year but not prolifically




Excelsagardens.com



garden.org


Pothos, Devil's ivy
Epipremnum aureum
 Araceae

- From Solomon Islands, French Polynesia
- Low to medium light
- Poisonous
- Stem cuttings
- Undemanding
- Few problems
- Keep on the dry side





Sansevieria, Cylindrical Snake Plant
Sansevieria cylindrica, Agavaceae

- Succulent plant native to Angola.
- An evergreen perennial plant
- Do not overwater
- Tolerates many different light levels
- Low humidity is fine
- Do not overfertilize
- Propagate by division







Exotenherz.de



Ikea.com

Sansevieria, Mother-in-law's tongue
Sansevieria trifasciata, Agavaceae


- From Indonesia, India, tropical Africa
- Tolerate many light levels
- Do not overwater
- Divisions or leaf cuttings to propagate
- Few problems
- Top heavy
- Undemanding

Glasshouseworks.com Liffle.com


Spider plant
Chlorophytum comosum, Liliaceae

- From coastal South Africa
- Medium to bright to low light
- Division, offshoots for propagation
- Don't overwater
- Fertilizer cautions



Tricolor Plant
Stromanthe sanguinea 'Triostar'
 Marantaceae


- From Brazil, variegated cv
- Between the leaf blade and the petiole is a swollen BB-sized lump called the pulvinus that helps orient the leaf according to the time of the day.
- Medium moisture, don't let get too dry
- Medium humidity
- Propagate by division
- Spider mites can be a problem



Gardentags.com


Weeping fig
Ficus benjamina
Moraceae

- From India, Southeast Asia, northern tropical Australia
- Latex-like sap is exuded when pruned
- Bright to medium light, but not south
- Likes high humidity
- Does not like drafts
- Do not overwater
- Scale, mealybugs, spider mites can be issues



ZZ Plant
Zamioculcas zamiifolia, Araceae

- Monotypic genus
- Tropical perennial native to eastern Africa and northeastern South Africa
- Takes low to medium light
- Keep somewhat dry
- No insects or diseases
- Propagate by leaf cuttings – is slow



Questions?

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