

Hardy Houseplants

The gardens are closed, and you want to grow something! To bring some beauty into your home this winter, try houseplants. There are many plants that are low maintenance and will *live*, even for those of us who don't have a green thumb. Light, air, water, and plant food are all you need to keep your houseplants healthy and vibrant.

Bright-indirect light can be found within 2-4 feet of Eastern and Western facing windows, 3-6 feet from Southern facing windows, or under "grow-lights." If **moderate** light is called for, plants can be as far as 8-10 feet from a South window, 3-6 feet from East or West windows, directly on a North facing windowsill, or use "grow-lights." **Low light** plants are the most versatile, and they will be fine in any light, natural or artificial.



Plants require *some* air circulation to prevent fungi and pests from settling in. To aid with air flow, leaves can be misted with a spray bottle as often as you like — plants love it.

"How often should I water?" is a question that everyone wants an answer to. Choose a day of the week to check your plants for water. If the soil is damp, there is already water there, do not add more until next week, if it needs it. Over-watering is the most common mistake with houseplants, and yellowing or wilting leaves are a sure sign that you are loving your plant to death.

When we water, it is a good time to fertilize. Plants *need* to be fed, you will notice a big difference in plants that get fertilizer, they will be stronger, more lush, and able to fight off diseases and insects.

Here are a few favorite plants that are *low maintenance*, widely available and are relatively inexpensive. **For sunny windowsills:** Desert Cacti will reward you with short-lived but spectacular flowers; Hibiscus is known for its large showy flowers; Jasmine will fill your home with a light citrus fragrance that can't be mimicked with a candle or spray; Jade plants require very little care and if properly fed, will flower for a great portion of the winter months. **For moderate light:** Try Snake plants, Pothos, Ivy, and Wandering Jew. The easiest of these are Snake plants and Pothos, these will tolerate almost any environment. The Wandering Jew plant is a very hardy hanging plant, it comes in varying shades of green to purple, it is tolerant of most lighting except for extremes of shade or sun. **For low light:** Nephthytis or "butterfly" plant, this plant has fleshy stems and good sized leaves with interesting variations of color. Ferns are another good choice for low light, but enjoy humidity and must be misted often.

In early Spring, when the gardening bug begins to bother you, it is the perfect time to repot your plants for the growing season ahead. Every other year increase the pot size by two inches in diameter, until you get to very large pots. To repot, simply slip the entire root ball with the soil out and break up the ball slightly to free up some of the compacted roots. Next, place a few inches of quality *potting soil* in the bottom of the new pot so that the top of the original root ball is not buried, then gently pack the potting soil around the ball, so that it is supporting the plant well, prune off any damaged foliage and water well with a dilute solution of fertilizer.

Enjoy your plants, but don't let Spring planting take all of your attention, houseplants will still need some care!

For More Information on Capital District Community Gardens' programs or to make a tax-deductible donation contact:



40 River Street, Troy, NY 12180
518.274.8685 CDCG@juno.com
www.cdcg.org