

LIGHT

Plants need light to photosynthesis and live.

DIRECT LIGHT

- comes from right in front of your window
- this type of light can be too harsh, especially in summer months when it is more intense
- the intensity of light coming through your windows is not as strong as outdoor light
- too much light causes faded leaves or burnt tips
- most tropicals want direct light
- plants like hibiscus, bougainvillea, citrus, jasmine, cactus and succulents

INDIRECT LIGHT

- this is bright light but not direct sun
- this can be beside a window, in a bright room, even just back from the window
- most houseplants prefer this type of light

LOW LIGHT

- low light can be described as a room where you cannot read without a light on
- this can also be a room without a window
- too little light will lighten leaf colour, make a plant become straggly as it reaches for the sun or can stop flowering
- sansevieria and zz plants will take low light

MEDIUM LIGHT

- most plants are fine with a medium light which is what most of our homes have
- a room with a window where you can read without a light on during a sunny day

BRIGHT LIGHT

- as with direct light, bright light can cause leaves to burn
- often, by just moving your plant back from the light source, you reduce the amount of light

DIRECTION

- a SOUTH window will give a good light supply with the longest amount of light in both winter and summer
- NORTH facing windows will give the least amount of light
- WEST facing windows get the strong afternoon sun which if very strong in summer
- the EAST facing window gives you the morning sun which is moderate

As you are determining what kind of light you have, remember to look outside your window for obstacles like deciduous trees, evergreens and buildings

I have a south facing window with a maple tree to the east and cedar hedge to the west, which makes it a great window for most houseplants.

WATER

ANOTHER NECESSARY REQUIREMENT FOR PLANT LIFE

TYPES OF WATER

- you should always use water that is room temperature
- if you have chlorine in your water, always let it sit for at least 24 hours so the chemicals can dissipate
- do not use water that has gone through a water softener
- avid gardeners have been known to collect rain water all year long to use on their houseplants

TOO LITTLE OR TOO MUCH

- each plant has its own water requirements
- some plants want to be evenly moist, while others want to dry out a bit before watering
- too much water will rot the roots
- too little water will cause wilting
- if your home is very dry, you may need to water more often
- plants tend to drink less water in the winter months when they are resting
- your best water gauge is your finger....use it to test your soil
- plants that like it moist are asparagus fern, anthurium, dracaena and spider plant
- plants that like it dry include jade, sansevieria, zz plant, cactus and succulents

TEMPERATURE

- most plants are okay with the temperatures in our homes which is from 60 to 75 (15 to 24)
- Consistency is the most important factor with temperature
- inconsistent temperatures can cause leaf drop
- watch for drafts from doors and window ledges
- also from heating vents or wood stoves
- plants that like it warmer are palm, croton, aloe vera, dieffenbachia, cactus & succulents
- plants that like it cooler are ivies, cyclamen, jasmine, dracaena, and jade
- plants that will take a draft include cyclamen, ivy, sansevieria, lemon cyprus, peace lily

HUMIDITY

- most homes are too dry for many houseplants and that is why they suffer when they are brought into our homes
- winter humidity in our homes is usually around 40% while it can be higher than 75% outside during the summer months

to increase humidity in your home

- put plants in room with more humidity, like kitchens and bathrooms
- group plants together, so they hold the moisture among themselves
- use a saucer filled with pebbles and water and set your pots on top....do not set directly in water though
- use a humidifier
- mist leaves

FERTILIZER

- like water and light, plants also need food
- fertilizers come in many types from the water soluble eyedropper type, powders you add to water, pellets you add to soil
- the numbers on the container tell you how much NITROGEN, PHOSPHORUS and POTASSIUM there is in the fertilizer.
- Nitrogen is the first number and is for the green leaf growth
- Phosphorus is the second number and it helps the plant to flower
- Potassium is the last number and it helps with healthy root growth and the overall health of the plant
- for most houseplants, I would use a 20-20-20 mix which is a basic overall fertilizer
- plants do not need to be fertilized in winter when they tend to rest, however, if you see that your houseplant is getting new growth, feed it
- I like to use the Shultz Liquid Plant food which you can just add to your watering routine
- it is a easy and light fertilizer and can be used weekly
- do not fertilize a plant that needs a good drink of water unless you water it first as the fertilizer can burn the roots
- some of the signs of under and over fertilizing are similar, so it is sometimes difficult to determine
- **HOWEVER** if you are not fertilizing, that is probably the reason for slow and weak growth, lack of flowers, pale or yellow leaves
- over fertilizing can discolour leaves, show as slow or weak growth, and you may see lower leaf drop as well
- if your plant has been in the same soil for a while, you will need to either fertilize more regularly or repot with some fresh new soil and nutrients