



Over the Garden Fence

Growing Houseplants



By Bob Labozetta (UC Master Gardener, Mariposa)

Indoor gardening is one method of beginning gardening or stretching beyond your outdoor gardening. Plants will beautify any indoor space. You can add color, dimension, and texture to your home's rooms. Additionally, it is widely purported that indoor plants can benefit your overall health and reduce stress. Tending indoor plants can be meditative, reconnects you with nature, and is a way of disconnecting from your electronic devices.

Houseplants have the same needs as outdoor plants, but it takes some trial and error to find the right balance indoors for each specific plant. Don't be afraid to make changes until you find the right place and conditions for your houseplants. The key factors to consider for houseplants are light requirements, container and soil compatibility, location and water/nutrient needs.

Houseplants vary considerably in how much light they require. Strong light found close to a south-facing window may be perfect for some and too much for others. The distance from the window, morning vs. afternoon light, etc. all play a factor in how happy your plant will be. A plant that is getting too much light usually turns a dull green or yellowish and the leaves will

begin to wilt. Plants not receiving enough light will get leggy and reach for the light. Humidity can also be a factor as can drafts. Dust accumulation can block light and harbor pests, so wipe the foliage periodically to keep the leaves dust-free.

Choose containers that will keep your plant happy. Consider both size and material. You want your plant to be able to grow, but not drown in the pot. You also want to be sure to use good potting soil (not garden soil) to promote healthy root growth. Houseplants need regular, thorough watering.

Water the entire root ball, but let the excess run out the bottom of the pot. Don't leave standing water in the catch tray—it can promote root diseases. Allow the soil to dry out in the top 2 inches of soil before watering again. Once every few months, put your plant in the shower, sink or outside and water your plant heavily to allow excess salts to drain out.

Houseplants tend to need regular fertilizing as the frequent watering leaches nutrients from the soil. Inspect your plants regularly for insects and pests and treat as necessary.

So, where do you begin? Start with easy-to-grow plants before tackling the more persnickety ones like orchids...

Pink Anthurium -- Its blooms are waxy leaves, not flowers, that can last up to eight weeks. Place it in indirect light and water it every one to two weeks.

Marble Queen Pothos -- Suitable to almost any environment, this plant will grow quickly in direct to medium bright light. Water it every one to two weeks when the potting mix is dry.

Black Echeveria Preta -- This is a wonderful low-maintenance succulent that does best in bright direct to indirect light. Water it every three to four weeks when the potting soil is dry.

ZZ Plant -- Thick stemmed with waxy leaves, this succulent does best in bright indirect to medium indirect light, though it will tolerate low light. Water it every three to four weeks when the potting soil is dry.

Sansevieria -- This is a large species of snake plant that can handle low light and minimal water. It does best in indirect light and when watered

every few weeks with the soil is dry.

Peperomia Ginny -- A leafy plant that does best in bright, indirect light, this is a pretty plant on the smallish side that is even pet-friendly.

Hedgehog Aloe -- This forgiving and beautiful aloe plant requires lots of sunshine, but it doesn't need much water. Use the sap to alleviate burns and other skin irritations.

Cacti -- Easy care when given plenty of sunshine, these desert plants certainly don't need much water.

Green Hoya -- An exotic, easy to grow yet slow growing vine with thick, waxy leaves and clusters of star-shaped waxy flowers. Tolerant of neglect, grow it in a hanging basket or upright on a trellis or totem.

For further research:

http://sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu/Indoor_Plants/

<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=12303>

http://marinmg.ucanr.edu/Choose_Plants/Indoor_Plants/

UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County are located at 5009 Fairgrounds Rd., Mariposa. For more gardening and event information, visit our website (http://cemariposa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardener/) and Facebook page (UC Master Gardeners of Mariposa County). UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Mariposa County, including Greeley Hill, Coulterville, and Lake Don Pedro (209-966-7078 or mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu). Listen to us on the radio at KRYZ 98.5 FM on Wednesdays at 5 pm and Saturdays at 2 pm.