

These Houseplants Have A Good Shot At Survival

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Feb. 7, 2020

Q: I have been reading about the benefits of houseplants and would like to grow some, but I have a brown thumb. Can you give me some advice on which plants are easy to grow?

A: There are many studies that prove plants make us feel happy. They brighten our environment, make oxygen from carbon dioxide and filter our air.

During the short winter days, when many folks are feeling down, looking at plants can help cheer us up.

In addition to beautifying our living space, they help remove toxins from the air. NASA was the first to experiment with using plants to detoxify air. While some plants filter out benzene, others filter formaldehyde and other household toxins. The University of Minnesota says that it takes approximately 15 plants, about the right size for an eight-inch pot, to clean the air in an 1,800 square-foot house.



Some easy-to-grow houseplants that look good — even with neglect — are hoya, pothos, rubber tree, jade, schefflera, ponytail palm and the cast-iron plant.

This plant can survive anywhere. (Photo: Garden Goods)

The cast-iron plant is great for areas in the home with low amounts of light. The others will need bright light, but not direct sunlight.

Avoid placing any houseplant in a trouble spot, such as near heating or air conditioning ducts, on electronics or a

radiator, or between a curtain and a frosty window.

Remember that heated air in your home can dry plants out. If you notice the leaves of a plant looking dry on the tips, provide a little extra humidity with a pebble tray or misting.

House plants should only be fertilized every two months. Use a good houseplant fertilizer. Allow the plants to rest without fertilizer during the winter months.

Don't overwater plants. Watering once every seven to 14 days is adequate, depending on the amount of light and the type of plant.

One per month, place your plants under the (gentle) shower spray to flush accumulated salts out of the pot and rinse dust off leaves. This helps keep plants looking their best.

Some house plants can be toxic, so do the research first if you have pets or small children.

The goldfish plant, spider plant, all peperomias and most small palms are easy to grow, and they're non-toxic to cats. They take moderate light and fit into many decorating schemes.

Other plants that are a bit harder to grow, but are cat-safe, are the prayer plant, the phalaenopsis orchid, the polka dot plant and many begonias. These plants like bright filtered light, and may require special watering practices and warmer house temperatures at night.

Different plants may be toxic to dogs. If you have a dog that chews on plants, check with your pet's veterinarian which plants are safe.

For more information on houseplants that are safe for pets, check out the [ASPCA's website at https://bit.ly/374qRRS](https://bit.ly/374qRRS).

The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email mastergardener@shastacollege.edu. The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.