



How to Successfully Overwinter Your Houseplants

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Taking houseplants outside for the spring, summer, and fall is a great way to keep your houseplants happy and healthy because the air movement, humidity, and temperatures outside reflects more closely their preferred growing conditions. Just make sure to keep an eye on the temperatures in your area beginning in late September so that you can make a plan to transition them inside for the winter.

When should I begin this process? When temperatures start falling into the 40s it's time to start the process of bringing in houseplants, but rather than immediately whisking everything inside we want to work with the natural cycles of the plants and gradually acclimate them to the winter season indoors. Beginning in September light levels and air temperatures will begin to decrease. Much like hardy plants that stay outdoors, this change signals the plant to slow down their growth rate to save energy in preparation for the lower light levels in the winter months ahead. Leaving many of your houseplants outside to experience this will help the plant more successfully transition to its indoor environment. It will also decrease insect populations and keep diseases from spreading.

What should I bring in? Lots of tropical plants live in climates where the 'winter' season gets in the 40s, so many plants can handle the cooler weather. Any plant that is currently fruiting or flowering will be most susceptible to the cold, so start with the most sensitive plants first bringing them in on nights where the temperatures will fall into the 40s. Birds of Paradise, many in the Ficus family, citrus, and Schefflera are just a few examples of cool weather tolerant houseplants. Some summer annual/tropical bulbs and flowers such as caladiums, elephant ears, geraniums, and dahlias can simply be stored completely dormant indoors in a cool dark place and brought back to life next spring.

Houseplants that are overwintered indoors require only what they need to survive until they go back outside next spring: good health, a time to rest, and adequate light, water and humidity levels

Good Health - One of the most common questions we get in the fall is "What should I spray on my houseplants before I bring them in?" Our answer is usually just a heavy stream of water. This will knock off unwanted insects, like spiders and ants, that have been summering in the beautiful retreat of your plant. Spraying an insecticide when you aren't sure if there is an active insect issue present not only wastes product but also money. It is important to inspect your plants prior to bringing them in to see if there is any insect activity that could be harmful. Once there is a diagnosis then the correct insecticide can be used on the plant to control the issue before bringing it inside. Once inside it is helpful to inspect plants for signs of insects and diseases regularly as early treatment is most effective. We recommend doing this every time you water. Keep in mind that keeping soil overly wet can encourage fungal diseases and fungus gnats. Proper watering can go a long way in avoiding these soil-born pests.

Time to Rest- The shorter days of late fall and winter signal a slowdown in the growth cycle of houseplants and tropicals. Because of this natural pattern, winter is not the best time to repot, divide, or even fertilize. Only in unavoidable situations should plants be disturbed at this time. In mid-March, near the spring equinox, the days grow longer and plants begin an active growth period in which fertilization, repotting, and dividing is best accomplished. This continues through the summer until around Labor Day.

Light - Short winter days and new windows with UV protection create lower light conditions indoors. The room may seem bright to us but to the plant it's not. Not all plants need the same amount of light and some are more adaptable than others, so be sure your plants are placed in a location with the necessary amount of light that they need to survive. It is also important to keep leaves wiped clean. Dust settled on leaves can affect the amount of light the plant receives. Additional light from grow lights or fluorescent lights can be helpful. 16 hours of lamp light followed by 8 hours of dark is recommended. Automatic timers can simplify the on/off cycle. Always turn or rotate your plants periodically to face the strongest light source (natural or artificial) so they will grow evenly and don't stretch.

Water & Humidity – Prescribing an exact watering routine is kind of like predicting the weather. Every home is different and conditions change with the seasons, but in general plants use less water in the winter than they do during the other seasons. It is important to know the conditions your plant needs in order to get in on the preferred watering routine. When you get a new plant, it may take a few weeks to learn exactly what each plant needs in your specific environment, but start by checking the soil moisture with your finger when you get it home. Most often, you should let the top inch dry out before watering again. The heat running more on cold days, fans moving, a stretch of cloudy vs sunny days, or more humid conditions in rooms like the bathroom and kitchen will affect how quickly plants dry out. Using a humidity tray can be helpful for plants that are more susceptible to the dry conditions created by winter heating.

Houseplants beautify the home and are also good for the psyche as well as the environment by cleaning the air. Take care of them and they will take care of you all winter long. Protect them from drafts and cold, but most of all take time to learn more about the specific plants you are caring for to help them not only survive, but thrive indoors.

