

Tropical Plant Care

Here are some tips to help you care for your tropical plants

Light

Tropical plants prefer lots of light but not all types can live in direct sunlight. Most prefer bright indirect light, while some can tolerate lower light. Light from a north or east window is generally fine while light from a south or west facing window should be filtered through sheer type curtains. If you do not have enough light it can be supplemented with a full-spectrum light bulb or “Grow light”.

Temperature

Tropical temperatures range between 18 to 27 C (65 to 80 F) degrees, so your home should be ideal for most tropical plants. However, be sure to keep them away from cold draughts or hot blasts from furnace vents. This can cause them to lose leaves.

Moisture

Mother Nature provides tropical plants with warm humid air which is not common in our homes. We need to mimic these conditions by misting them to provide moisture, watering with warm (tepid) water, and planting them in soil that drains quickly.

The frequency with which you should water your house plants depends on; the size of the plant, the size of the pot, the temperature in your home, and the humidity of the air. This makes it almost impossible to “schedule” your watering. During the winter plants consume less water due to lower levels of light and lower temperatures. During the summer they consume more water due to higher levels of light and warmer temperatures.

You should check the soil frequently (at least twice a week) to determine the need for water. You should water when the top ½ inch of soil has become dry. The water should be warm (tepid) and not straight out of the tap as our tap-water contains chlorine. Fill your watering can and allow it to sit overnight so that the chlorine can evaporate. Be sure not to overwater as soggy soil can smother the roots. You should also never leave excess water in the saucer.

Fertilizer

The easiest way to fertilize your house plants is with a water soluble fertilizer. These are dissolved into the water when you water your plants. You should fertilize your indoor tropical plants once a week or once every two weeks depending on the fertilizer. We carry a selection of water soluble fertilizers including Schultz, Plant Prod 20-20-20, and Miracle Gro. We also carry an organic fertilizer, Raingro 4-2-3. Be sure to follow the directions on the fertilizer containers as to the mixing ratio. Mixing the fertilizer too strong could harm the plants.

Insects and Other Problems

Be sure to watch for insects and diseases which may attack your plants. When you are checking to see if your plants need water be sure to look for any insects or other diseases that may be harming your plants. If you notice a problem pick a few leaves off, seal them in a bag, and bring them in to our store so that one of our staff can help you properly identify the problem and recommend the best solution.

Cleaning

You can improve the appearance of many indoor plants by periodically cleaning the leaves with a damp cloth. You should avoid any soap or other cleaning products as they may harm the plants leaves.

Pruning

Some plants benefit from light pruning to encourage new leaves. If you need to prune a branch to remove it prune just above a leaf joint. Pruning your plants can help to produce a bushier plant. If your plant begins to develop yellow leaves it is generally best to remove them as it is unlikely that they will revert back to being green.

Transplanting

You should not have to re-pot your house plants very frequently. Most house plants can live for several years in the same pot. Only when plants have become root-bound will you need to repot them. You can determine if they are root-bound by removing the plant from the pot and looking at the roots. A plant is root-bound when more than half of the pot is filled with roots.

To re-pot a plant moisten the soil first, remove the pot by turning it on its side or upside down, place into the new larger pot, fill around the root ball with a sterile potting soil, and press the soil firmly into place. After the plant has been transplanted water well and feed with a fertilizer.

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