

Choose plants suitable to your environment and the level of care you are able to provide. Look for healthy and perky plants. If purchasing a flowering plant, pay attention to buds which are the promise of the future.

Lighting

It's best to select a plant that fits your indoor environment, rather than changing your environment. Although all indoor plants do best in bright light situations, some will tolerate low light situations. In a south, east or west window, bright light plants should be one to six feet from the window, medium light plants four to eight feet from the window, and low light plants near a north facing window or away from other windows.

Watering

Determining the water needs of plants is challenging. Each type of plant has different water needs. Basically, low light plants like Chinese Evergreen, Aspidistra, ZZ Plant and Janet Craig Dracaena require less frequent watering – because they will dry out slowly. High light plants will dry out more quickly and will need to be watered more often.

When you've determined your plant needs water, thoroughly soak the soil so the water runs through. Empty the saucer after a couple of hours, so the bottom of the pot does not sit in water. If the water runs through very quickly, the plant is probably very dry, and the soil has shrunk away from the edge of the pot. This will require several soakings to saturate the entire root ball.

When to water? A water meter can be a very helpful tool to gauge moisture levels. Additionally, you can judge when a plant is dry when the container is light in weight, when the leaves are beginning to wilt, or when the foliage takes on a dull look.

Fertilizing

As daylight increases in February or March, begin to fertilize with Al's Water Soluble Fertilizer or other equivalent about once a month for high light plants or just once a year for low light plants. Most plants will not need fertilizing in November, December or January. Orchids, especially Phalaenopsis and Paphiopedilums, should be fertilized every other week. The soil should be moist when using a water soluble fertilizer, so try not to fertilize when the soil is dry.

Repotting

A plant should be repotted when you want the plant to increase in size or when it is difficult to keep up with the watering. Repot anytime except November, December or January. Use a good draining potting soil like Al's Potting Soil or equivalent. Increase the container size gradually. An easy way to display your new plant... put your plant on a plastic saucer and place both directly into decorative container – no repotting is necessary!

Insects and Diseases

Common insects to look for are scale, spider mites, mealy bug, whitefly and aphids. Monitor your plants often and begin treatment early, before the insects spread. Treat them with horticultural oil, insecticidal soap, neem oil, systemic insecticide and/or a wipe with alcohol. Fungal diseases like powdery mildew or leaf spots can be treated with horticultural oil or fungicide. These products work best as a preventive, so early detection is essential.