

HOUSEPLANT HELPER

As with any garden, choosing plants for inside your home or office requires more than just grabbing what looks attractive to you. While some houseplants love direct sun and warm, humid climates, others will fade rapidly under those conditions.

Let's take a look at some of your houseplant options, location by location.

The easiest thing to do is to break down possible locations by the amount of light they receive. But before we get into the definitions of each category, there are a few additional factors to remember. The amount of actual light a location receives will change with the seasons. For example, a plant may do great in a southern exposure window during the fall, winter, and spring, but summer might prove to be too hot or bright—necessitating a move during that season. Also remember that other objects will influence the amount of light that enters through a window, including trees, shrubs, buildings, awnings, and curtains. Likewise, light-colored walls will reflect light, while dark-colored walls will absorb it, making less light available to your plants. No matter the light level, you'll want to avoid excessively drafty areas, direct exposure to radiators, and drafts from air conditioning.

1 Low light. You'll usually find low light conditions in windowless areas with artificial lighting or with north-facing windows, which typically get only 20% of the light that a southern-facing window will receive. These are also the coolest locations. On average, plants in low light areas won't need as much fertilizer as those in high light.

2 Medium light. Most east- and west-facing windows receive medium light levels. This partial shade may also be created by filtering light through sheer curtains.

3 High light. Southern exposure usually corresponds with the high light levels of full sun locations. You can also enhance light intensity with light-colored walls. High-light locations are the warmest, so you'll want to look out for heat buildup that can



damage plants. It's a good idea to keep plants at least 6 in. from window panes during hot weather in order to prevent foliage from burning.

Choices

When it comes to houseplants, the variety of plants can be a bit overwhelming. Here, we organized some of the more common indoor plants by light preferences. We've also noted additional preferences for each plant—such as the temperature they prefer, watering requirements, if they need high humidity, and so on. As you select plants, keep the climate of your house in mind and compare it to the preferences of the plant.

If you're new to taking care of plants, you might want to start with some of the easiest plants, such as pothos, aspidistra, aglaonema, or dracaena, which will tolerate a little abuse. For plants such as orchids or ferns, you don't have to be an expert, but you will need to pay attention to more precise individual care instructions for each plant.

Low Light

Aglaonema (silver evergreen): Prefers warm temps (keep above 60F at night). Soil surface can dry between waterings.

Aspidistra (cast-iron plant): Does well in either hot or cold locations. Don't overwater; allow the top two-thirds to three-quarters of the potting mix to dry before watering again.



Each issue, *Green Profit* organizes a ready-made class on livegood and hardgood topics in the form of a magazine page you can tear out, even giving it to customers who want questions answered, myths debunked and a reason to be in a garden environment, regardless of the season. You provide the customers and example products; we'll do the rest.

Chamaedorea (parlor palm): Great for large containers. Needs lots of water; do *not* let it dry out between waterings.

Pothos: Keep soil slightly moist between waterings. Prefers warmer temps. Varieties with lots of white may prefer more light.

Sansevieria (snake plant): Easy to grow and tolerates a wide range of conditions, including high light. Allow soil to dry between waterings.

Cross overs: Plants such as dracaena, philodendron, English ivy, and spathiphyllum are listed below as medium light plants. However, they can adapt to low-light conditions as well.

Medium Light

African violets: Average temps. Be careful not to overwater.

Anthurium (flamingo flower): Requires consistent moisture levels. Prefers warm temps (68F or higher during the day) and high humidity.

Asparagus fern: Considered easy to grow. Keep soil barely moist at all times.

Brassaia (schefflera): Prefers warm temps and wet soil. However, don't get the foliage wet when you're watering it. Starts small but can grow quite large.

Bromeliad: Does well with average indoor temps. Likes high humidity.

Chamaedorea (bamboo): Requires moist soil and warm temperatures.

Chlorophytum (spider plant): Easy to grow. Allow top of soil to dry between waterings.

Dieffenbachia (dumbcane): Avoid overwatering. Can grow 5 to 7 ft. tall.

Dracaena: Will tolerate low light. Prefers dry soil.

Ficus benjamina (weeping fig): Will tolerate owners who forget to water every now and then. Grows into a tree form and can be summered outdoors.

Hedera helix (English ivy): Will acclimate to lower light levels. Keep soil slightly moist between waterings.

Nephrolepis (Boston fern): Prefers cool room temperatures. Likes humidity. Keep soil slightly damp at all times.

Too much? Not enough?

How do you know if your houseplants are getting enough light? If you start seeing pale or spindly growth, the plant probably isn't getting enough light. You can move it or provide additional artificial light.

If you see browned tips, or whitish/bleached spots, the plant may be getting too much light. Either move it further back from the light source, provide shading with a curtain, or change locations.

Did you know?

Research has shown that plants are more than just décor. Scientific studies have shown that indoor plants can improve air quality and have positive psychological effects on people such as increased workplace productivity, increased creativity and lower stress.

Rex begonia: Easy to grow. Allow soil to dry between waterings. Prefers high humidity.

Philodendron: Crosses into the low-light category as well. Prefers very warm temps. Keep soil slightly moist at all times.

Spathiphyllum (peace lily): Requires consistent moisture levels. Tolerates low light but flowers better in medium light. Prefers temps above 60F.

Syngonium (arrowhead vines): Keep soil barely moist at all times. Prefers very warm temps.

Orchids: There are several different types of orchids, and you'll need to care for them individually. In general, you'll need medium light and average-to-warm temps.

Tradescantia (wandering Jew): Easy to grow. Allow soil to dry slightly between waterings.

High Light

Aloe: Very easy to grow. Can allow to dry out between waterings during the winter, but needs more frequent watering in the summer.

Alternanthera (Joseph's coat): Keep soil moderately moist.

Aphelandra (zebra plant): Prefers high temps and high humidity. Needs consistent moisture from March through October, and less water in the winter.

Coffee plant: Does best in warm day temps of 70F or higher. Keep soil evenly moist.

Coleus: Keep soil evenly moist.

Jade plant: Easy to grow. Will also tolerate filtered or indirect sunlight. Likes day temps above 68F, but will tolerate a wide range of temps.

Hibiscus: Loves warm temps. Allow soil to dry between waterings. Can move planter onto your patio in the summer.

Hoya carnosa (wax plant): Water often in summer but less in winter. Likes warm temps.

Schlumbergera (Christmas cactus): Easy to grow but can be difficult to get to bloom because it needs 12 hours of darkness each day in the fall to initiate blooming. 🌱

—Jennifer Duffield White