

Your home may not be a favorable place for indoor plants. The air may be too dry, the drafts too prevalent, the nights too warm. You may "kill your plants with kindness" by giving them too much to drink—or starve them by failure to feed them often enough.

But don't envy your neighbor who has a "green thumb." The "green thumb principles" are few. The chief ones for Arizona are on this page. Read, understand, and practice them—and a garden will grow in your home.



*Light
on the
Subject*

Light is essential for the manufacture of food by the plant leaves—food for growing flowers as well as more leaves and stems.

Plants that do not receive enough sunlight stop growing when the food reserves within the plant have been used up. Excessive sunlight destroys the chlorophyll (green color) in the leaf faster than it can be formed and yellowing of the foliage becomes evident after long exposure to direct sunlight.

Dark locations or exposure to full sunlight should be avoided in selecting a location for indoor plants. Most indoor plants will get light enough if placed near windows away from direct sunlight or in any area of the room that is well lighted.



*Don't
"Draft"
Them*

Some indoor plants are sensitive to sudden temperature changes. These must be kept away from doors, open windows—and out of direct line of cooler or heater vents.

Gas Chambers

Gas injury is often encountered in the kitchen where raw gas might escape from unlighted burners. An amount so small that it would not be detected by humans may be enough to cause injury or death to plants.

Some "Green Thumb" Tips for Your INDOOR PLANTS

By Steve Fazio

Department of Horticulture

It's the Humidity

Control of transpiration (the loss of water through plant leaves and stems) is difficult, inasmuch as many home heating units are not equipped to increase humidity. During the winter, the average relative humidity in the home varies from 10 to 30%. Indoor plants are best adapted to 90% humidity, which is generally maintained in greenhouses.

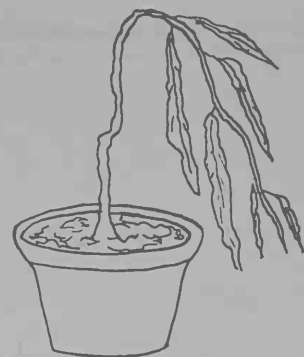
Whenever possible a pan of water should be placed on the heating furnace to offset the drying effect of the heated air. A mulch of peat moss around the base of plants moistened at intervals increases the humidity near the foliage.

Hot or Cold

The uniform winter temperature in homes with thermostatically controlled heating is not favorable for growth of plants. Food manufactured during the day is normally held in reserve for new growth. When night temperatures are maintained at a constant 70 or 72°F., as during the day, respiration (consuming stored food) continues throughout the night. This depletes the plant's food reserve that would otherwise be used for growth. A continuation of high night temperatures will eventually cause yellowing of foliage and death of the plant.

Indoor plants are best suited to temperatures of 70°F. during the day and approximately 55°F. at night. Low night temperature will reduce respiration—and plants will maintain a balance of stored food for new growth.

Plants placed near glass windows remain cooler than in any other part of the house. Heat is radiated to the cold glass and a more favorable temperature is maintained. Avoid placing plants in direct line with heating vents. Air currents may dry out leaves faster than the plant can replace the lost moisture.



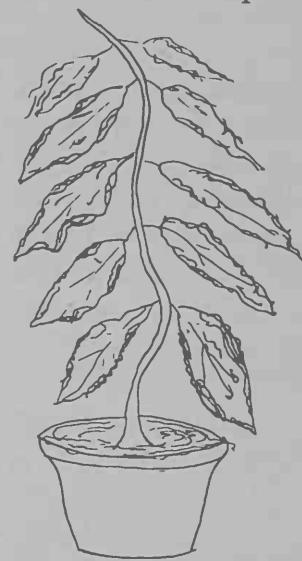
*Drain,
Don't
Drown*

Indoor plants often fail to thrive because they are given too much water or where there is a lack of drainage. The latter happens when plants are placed in containers with no means for draining off excess water. This excess water excludes oxygen from the root zone. A peculiar odor develops from the microorganisms developing in the absence of oxygen. Plants growing in this type of media show yellowing and browning of the foliage. Use of pots with holes in the bottom, or with a pebble drainage area will prevent this damage.

Watering at regular intervals is not recommended, since air humidity may vary and transpiration may increase or decrease between watering periods. Watering when the soil surface shows a lack of moisture is a more reliable method. Measured amounts of water will often prevent overwatering.

A suggested amount of water to apply for any given container is one cubic inch of water to each 6-8 cubic inches of soil. (Small pots dry out more quickly.)

Examples: 3" pot—3 tbsps. of water
4" pot—1/4 cup water
5" pot—1/2 cup water
6" pot—3/4 cup water



*Feed
Them
Well*

Without added fertilizer, indoor plants will not maintain proper growth and leaf color. Depletion of soil nutrients by plants, with roots confined in small containers is quite rapid. Applications of fertilizer at intervals of 1 to 3 months in proper amounts should be sufficient.

Mixed fertilizers containing varying amounts of organic matter should be used rather than straight mineral types, because of the danger of burning with over-application of the mineral types.