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1-1-2002

How Do I Care For Indoor Plants During The Summer?

Mary Ann Dunn

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Recommended Citation
Dunn, Mary Ann, "How Do I Care For Indoor Plants During The Summer?" (2002). *All Archived Publications.* Paper 353.
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_histall/353

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ask A Specialist

A weekly question/answer column

How Do I Care For Indoor Plants During The Summer?

Mary Ann Dunn answers:*

Plants need extra care during the hot summer months. The following guidelines will help prevent drooping when the heat is on.

- Keep plants in a cool place in the house and be sure they are away from south or west-facing windows so they are not directly hit by the sun. If you have a swamp cooler, your plants will receive a nice dose of humidity. If not, use a humidifier periodically or make a pebble tray by placing small pebbles in a shallow pan or tray. Add water to the top of the pebbles, then place your plant pot on top of the stones. Fertilize your plants every three to four weeks.
- If you go on vacation for more than 10 days, ask a friend or neighbor to care for your plants. If you will be on a shorter trip, water your plants before you go and leave extra water in the saucer for plants that need to be kept moist. Another way to keep plants humid while you are away is by making a plastic bag greenhouse. Place three or four sticks into the soil of your watered plant to keep the leaves away from the bag. Then place the bag over the plant and tape it firmly to the pot. To make a greenhouse for a large number of plants, place them in the bathtub, water them and tape plastic to the walls and sides of the tub. This should keep them moist for several days.
- Other than fuzzy leafed plants, most plants are invigorated by a summer outside if they are kept in a cool spot and checked daily for moisture. To protect delicate leaves, watering should be done by hand and not with the hose. Move house plants outside when the danger of frost has passed and bring the plants in if you expect a cool night. Start plants out in the shade for a few days and gradually increase into brighter light. Most foliage and flowering plants are better off in dappled light or deep shade; however, cactus and succulents can take full sun. Protect your plants from wind, which dries them out and can damage the foliage. Keep an eye out for insects and treat them quickly. Move your plants inside at the end of the summer while it is still warm, and change the lighting on them as gradually as you did when taking them out.

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* Mary Ann Dunn is Utah State University Extension Horticulture Assistant