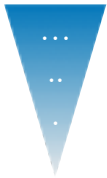


Stop killing Houseplants

Tips for the 'average' houseplant. You need to learn a few exceptions such as orchids and succulents.



Watering
Heat and Light
Pest and diseases
Feeding

Watering

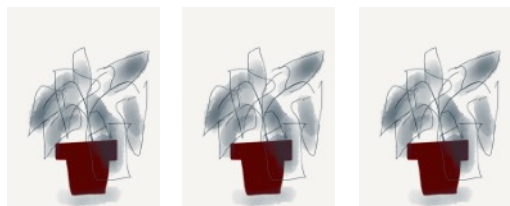
Plant roots need **water and air**

If a compost has a **good physical structure** it will hold water and **let excess drain away.** ✓

- Use good quality compost
- Don't compact compost, stop those anxious fingers kneading the soil down. ✗
- Don't let plants sit in saucers of water unless you are actually watering them!
- Water the compost until all the root ball is thoroughly moist, allow to drain. If you are not sure, *wait*, **don't water little and often.** ✗

Get used to how heavy a moist pot and a dry pot feels - is it the weight of a wet sponge or a meringue? Stick your finger a couple of centimetres into the compost, if it's still dry you can think about watering. [This also makes you look like you know what you're doing.] ☆

The plant may tell you whether or not to water, if the leaves wilt in the afternoon and evening it's probably dry and will recover if you water it. If the leaves are continuously wilting and yellow, you have killed the roots - roots need water **and** air! Back to stage one.



WILTING LEAVES

- i) is it a trailing plant?!
- ii) pot light, underwatered,
- iii) pot heavy, overwatered

If you have let the plant get **very dry** (this is usually recoverable) the **compost may shrink** and any water you put on drains away. If you

keep doing this, the plant will fade and wither and make you wish it was dead. **Water very dry compost by immersing the whole pot in a bucket of tepid water.** Put your hand over the top and wait to the bubbles stop. Phew!.

Heat and light

If it's comfortable for you, it's comfortable for the average plant. Do you like sitting on a radiator all day and in front of an open window at night? Plants can't move (much), they don't like change, extremes or cold draughts.

Bright indirect light suits most houseplants. Things change - a warm sunny position in winter can become death valley in summer. To get an idea of how light a room is, look into it from outside, you can see how the light levels fall off (actually with the square of the distance). 🌟

Pest and diseases

Aphids, fungus flies, vine weevils and root rots certainly happen, but probably more plants die from physiological disorders caused by poor management, the greatest of which is overwatering or alternate overwatering and underwatering.

Feeding

Houseplants are generally slow growing and their nutrient requirement is modest. Dilute feed at every other watering in the growing season is quite enough. Most will not need feeding at all in winter. If you pot a plant on (only one size larger at a time) you are also feeding the plant

Interconnectedness

If the plant is at a happy temperature in bright indirect light with moist but not wet compost, it will grow well and will benefit from some food and more water. If the plant is not growing well, don't smother it with water and fertiliser, back off, make sure it has good light and temperature. If it doesn't recover in a week, knock it out of the pot and check the roots. If the root tips are brown it is usually not worth trying to reclaim the plant.

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