

4. How often do I water?

This is the single most common question about houseplants, and for good reason; we'd love to be able to say "once a week" or "once every three days," but plants' water needs change throughout the year. The real answer is: when they need it. So when do they need it?

Overwatering happens when we water *too frequently*, not when we give too much water at a particular time. The goal is to *get water to all the roots* (by thorough drenching) and to *make sure they get air* (by waiting between waterings).

For **smaller pots**, push your finger into the soil. If it's dry just below the surface, it's time to water; if not, wait a day or two and check again.

With **large pots**, a dry surface doesn't guarantee that it's not still wet farther down. Dig deep with your fingers, or push a bamboo chopstick down into the soil like a dipstick, to check the moisture level.

5. How much do I water?

For most **green leafy plants**, drench the soil until water comes out the bottom, then let it dry 1/2 way down before watering again.

Cactus and succulents are a little different. Most of them want a thorough drenching, but let them go bone-dry before watering again. During winter they can stay dry for longer; prolonged, wet, cold soil is a death sentence!

Air plants can either be sprayed down, or soaked for half-an-hour at least once weekly. But don't let water linger in the crevices!

Everyone loses some plants. When we master one group, we move onto a new group, kill them for a while—and on goes the cycle. Learn from your mistakes, don't give up, and never go plastic!



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"I have a black thumb!"

Are you a houseplant murderer? Do rubber trees give you flashbacks? Have you killed so many plants that you feel a twinge of guilt every time you see a fern? Are plastic plants looking a little more attractive these days?

Some lucky people grow up surrounded by well cared-for plants, but nobody is born with a "green thumb." Likewise, nobody really has a "black thumb" either. Talking to your plants might not help much.

However, learning to listen and understand their needs will boost both your confidence and your chances of success.

The Indoor Sun Shoppe

1. Assess your conditions and choose plants that fit them

An unhappy or dead plant is living in conditions it's not adapted for. Light, especially here in Seattle, is a big culprit.

- Look at your windows.
 - Which way do they face?
 - Are they unobstructed, or blocked by buildings and trees?
 - How far away will the plant live from the window?

Keep in mind: The info in most plant books and tags are generalized. They're also not written with the Pacific Northwest in mind. A plant that might do fine in an East window during winter in California may languish in our dark, short winter days.

Temperature can also be an issue, but usually avoiding extremes is enough to keep your plant going.

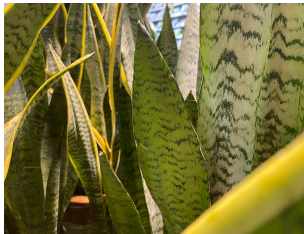
2. Some plants just *are* a little pickier

If you're completely new to houseplants, it's best to start with less specialized, more forgiving plants. We're always here to steer you in the right direction—we love hearing that our plants are doing great in your home!

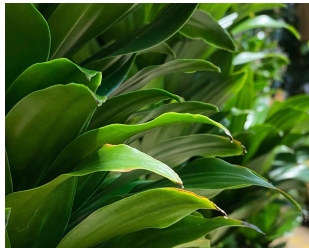
Go-to-plants for beginners:



Pothos



Sansevieria



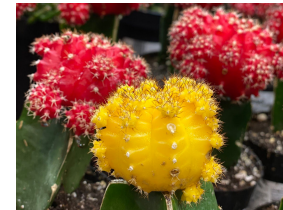
Dracena

3. Consider the plant's native habitat

Plants in nature have adapted to their specific environments. A plant native to cool, always-moist riverbanks won't appreciate desert-like conditions. Likewise, a desert plant won't last a week in a swamp.

But most plants fall somewhere in between these extremes. So when you choose a plant to take home, consider your own personal environment.

Plants living in hot and dry environments:



Plants living in shaded, moist environments:

