

## Houseplants

While cooler weather means fresh work outside, it is also time to make arrangements for the indoor garden. Indoor plants are often treated like furniture: just there. Indoor plants can be not only attractive, but also interactive – how many other decorative elements actually grow before one’s eyes – not to mention that some can even purify the air.

Indoor plants have issues, however. Many plants will grow in reduced light, but not produce flowers. How much time and energy can be devoted to maintaining the indoor herbarium? Most common house plants have the ability to withstand poor light, erratic watering, even the occasional leaping puppy.

Are there children and pets who might succumb to the temptation to chew foliage? Avoid plants like oleander or dieffenbachia.

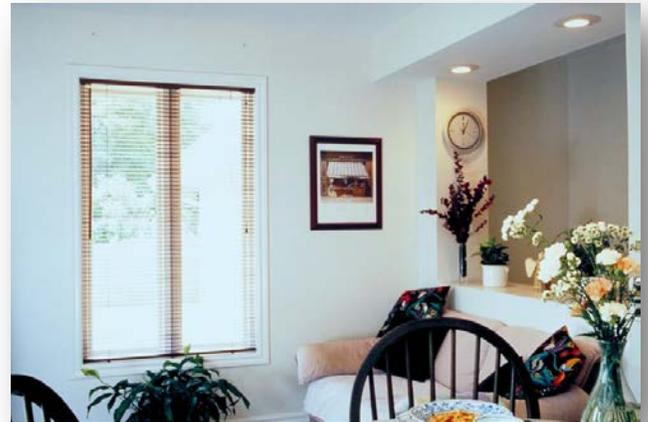
Pots expand in one inch increments until they reach eight inches, after which they usually increase by two inches per step. Most plants arrive in drab plastic containers of green or black measured in inches. Repot them into something pleasant to see.

Terra cotta clay may be glazed, providing an attractive exterior. Unglazed clay pots tend to dry rapidly. Glazing seals the surface; hence the soil in glazed pots holds water better.

Clay pots are heavy and breakable.

Plastic pots are the alternative to clay, and come in an enormous range of sizes and styles. Some have traditional clay pots’ color and shape, but they need not. The gardener’s imagination and taste should determine pot selection.

Make sure that the edges of any pot have a smooth, rounded surface. Unlike inexpensive clay pots, low-cost plastic pots often have surprisingly rough edges on their tops. Rough tops damage tender leaves and stems, so use these with plants that stand up straight (like dracaena) and not drape over the sides (like philodendron).



Some plants look best when flowing over the side of the pot. They may either be kept pinched back to form a spherical shape, or allowed to hang loose, and even form long undisciplined vines. It is up to the gardener’s aesthetic.

Plants desperately need drainage. This is why people are warned not to permit houseplants to sit in a saucer of water.

There should be at least one drainage hole in the pot. If there is no hole, then it should serve as a pretty container to hold

another pot. When using an outer container, arrange the plant so that it will sit above any water that drains out into the container. Place the plant pot on top of small rocks in the outer container (not inside the plant pot). It will dry slower if it is double potted this way.

A hanging pot will dry out faster than one sitting on a surface. With a smaller root ball to hold water, a small pot will dry faster than a large one. An unglazed clay pot will dry faster than a pot which has no glazing.

In other words, a plant inside a small, clay hanging pot will dry out far quicker than a large plastic one sitting on a table.

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