

Seven Easy Steps To Bring Houseplants Indoors for the Winter

by Diane Keller, Fairfax Master Gardener

Fall is a beautiful time of year with the temperatures turning cooler and the daytime sun growing shorter. This is the time of year to prepare your plants for transitioning indoors so you can continue to enjoy their beauty. Use these seven easy steps when preparing your plants.

One of the first steps to bringing your plant indoors is to find a suitable place for its new temporary home during the winter. Take into consideration the amount of sunlight your plant needs. It is important to choose a place away from heating vents, doors or anywhere there might be a draft that will dry your plant out. After you've selected the right location, start reducing the time the plant is left outside. This will make the adjustment to the indoor climate easier.



photo: Susan Marquesen, Penn State Extension

Next, decide if the pot that your plant was in outdoors needs to be changed. Make sure that the pot is large enough after the summer growth for the roots and plenty of soil. This is also a good way to ensure there are no cracks in the container that could allow water to leak out onto a floor or table.

Third, remember that fall is a rest period necessary for your plants to thrive and survive the winter. As such, fall is not a time to promote growth especially when taking plants indoors. It is not a time to fertilize.

Fourth, make sure when you bring your plants indoors there are no little critters attached to the leaves or buried in the soil of the plants. Follow these steps to facilitate this process:

- Physically inspect your plants, especially under the leaves, to make sure there are no visible insects. If there are, use soapy water to remove them or a safe insecticide to make sure there are no lingering bugs.
- Unpot your plants over a piece of newspaper and inspect the roots of the plant. If any roots need to be trimmed, do so at this time. Flake away as much of the dirt as possible without damaging the roots.
- Insert the plant roots into a bucket of water. Let the roots soak in the water for around 15 minutes. Any bugs that were in the dirt should wash out in the water.
- Replant your plant in an appropriately sized planter with fresh soil.

Fifth, consider that some plants may need a more humid atmosphere to thrive during the winter. To increase the moisture around a plant, take a tray and put a layer of small rocks on it. Then you can pour a small amount of water over the tray and create a moister atmosphere around the plant. Place the plant on top of the tray with rocks. Misting your plant during the winter will also help plants from becoming too dry.

Sixth, it is also important to rotate your plant so that all the leaves have the chance to bask in the sunlight of the window. If there is not enough sunlight that is near the spot where you chose to bring your plant indoors, you could

also put a grow light near the plant. There are many different types of grow lights on the market today that will help you find the right look for your location as well as helping your indoor plant survive the winter with less sunlight.

Finally, check your plant often to make sure that it is adjusting to the new environment. Fertilizing your plant should not really be necessary during the winter months. When spring is around the corner and you want your plant to start growing again, slowly start a fertilization routine in preparation for bringing your plant outdoors.

Bringing plants indoors will give you comfort and beauty until the warm weather arrives again, and we can all go outdoors and enjoy planting again.

References

- [Time To Bring Houseplants Back Inside](#), Robin Trott, University of Minnesota Extension
- [Houseplant Moving Day: Bringing Tropicals in for Winter](#), Erin Morrison, Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia
- [Welcome back, Begonia!](#) Smart ways to invite plants in from the cold, Marsha Goldberg, Fairfax Master Gardener