

Caring for Houseplants in the Winter

Give your houseplants the best care this winter. Our manager of horticulture, Seth Harper, has laid out some great tips to make sure that your plants look their best all winter long.

For many plants, particularly our common tropical houseplants, care doesn't vary greatly during the year – they still need sunlight, water, and fertilizer. But because sunlight from windows is so much less at our latitude during the winter, unless your plants are directly under artificial grow lights, you'll want to make some adjustments to your care routine.



Scale back fertilizing and watering

With less sunlight reaching the plant, less photosynthesis is occurring. Growth will slow and the need for fertilization will decrease. Consider the winter months as a rest period for your plants. Cut back or even eliminate fertilization, and be wary of overwatering. Cold, soggy soils can promote disease.



Be cautious of hot, dry air

Watch out for warm drafts from heating vents – they can cause leaves to crisp at the edges or drop off entirely. Some strategies to help tropical houseplants cope with the dry air in our homes during the winter include grouping plants together, placing them on trays of moist gravel, or misting periodically.

Tailor your care to your plant

Of course, some plants require more specific care routines. Many succulents appreciate greatly reduced watering in the winter. Consider watering as little as once a month for these plants, and never let their pots sit in a wet saucer. Other plants bloom actively at this time of year. Christmas cactuses, for example, need consistent water and fertilizer during bloom – let them rest after the flowers fade. If you've been saving poinsettias all year, remember they will need complete darkness for 13-16 hours a night to initiate blooming.



Freshen the soil

As day length increases in late February and March, consider repotting with fresh soil. This is a great time to set up your well-rested plants for a spectacular growing season. Ramp up watering and fertilizing as the sunlight increases, and your plants will respond.

Have lingering plant questions for Seth? Email us at info@naturemuseum.org

