

# Orchids and Indoor Plant Care

[www.nwcore.org](http://www.nwcore.org)

**Water** More houseplants die from overwatering than from anything else! Most houseplants can not tolerate soil that is always wet. Some succulent plants (such as cacti or jade) can survive a month or two without watering. Learn the preferences of your plants.

Always ensure the bottom of your pot has drainage holes. If it doesn't repot it immediately. Otherwise, it can develop root rot and die! Providing a tray underneath will allow for a small amount of water to be absorbed.

Water plants less in the winter or if your house is cooler than 60 degrees F. Do not water automatically or on a "regular schedule, water plants when they need it by doing the "finger check", inserting finger to the second knuckle to check for moisture.

Use room temperature water, preferably rain-water. Tap water contains chemicals that your plant may not like. Avoid watering the leaves. Unless you are giving the plant a bath!

**Humidity** Is a tough factor to perfect, as most homes are fairly dry—especially in the winter.

Many of the most common houseplants come from tropical regions, where humidity is naturally high. They will be happiest when the relative humidity is kept at 50 percent or higher.

Group houseplants near each other to form a support group to cope with the low humidity of most homes in winter. Consider placing plants on large trays with gravel, then occasionally add water to the tray. Plants should be in their own pot trays so that they are not being overwatered.

**Fertilizer** Too much fertilizer can be detrimental to a plant's health, so don't fertilize more than necessary.

In winter, feed lightly or not at all; houseplants are especially sensitive to overfeeding at this time of year, when most go into dormancy.

In spring, start to feed plants again. Along with more hours of daylight, this will kickstart their growing phase. Continue feeding through fall. A balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) works fine for houseplants, although fertilizers with a higher ratio of nitrogen will promote greater foliage growth.

For flowering plants, use a fertilizer with more phosphorous.

**Summer Camp** Move houseplants outside for a nice summer break. They will appreciate the fresh air, sunshine and change of space. Divide and re-pot any pot-bound plants so they will grow well during spring and summer. Prune judiciously to create compact, attractive specimens.

**Winter Care** Provide extra protection to houseplants on windowsills if it is very cold. Place cardboard between the plants and the glass. Be sure the plants don't touch the windowpanes.

Open the doors and windows when temperatures permit to give your house a change of air. This will benefit you *and* your houseplants.

Re-invigorate your houseplants by removing the top 1/4 inch of soil and top-dressing with fresh potting soil.

If your houseplants' leaves grow dusty, gently wipe them down with a wet paper towel. Too much dust can clog a plant's stomata (pores), making it harder for the plant to "breathe."

**"Wind"** We don't think of our houses as having wind, but plants do. Forced air furnaces provide us with a warm house but create currents of hot air which are very drying to plants. Avoid placing any plant in an area where it will be exposed to this effect. Even cacti and succulents will be challenging trying to survive.

**Pests** To get rid of bugs in houseplants, push a clove of garlic into the plant's soil. If the garlic sprouts and grows, just cut it back.

Remove aphids from houseplants with a mixture of equal parts rubbing alcohol and water, plus a drop of dishwashing detergent. Apply this to troubled plants with a soft brush.

Mealybugs and scale are commonly seen on houseplants. The above mixture also works on these.

Regular monitoring of your houseplants is key to beating an infestation. Additionally, keeping them adequately watered (but not too much), appropriate light & and temperature for their needs will help them stay healthy and fight off pests.



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## Plants TOXIC to Pets

For more detailed information on plants that are specific to dogs and cats, visit

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/cats-plant-list>

<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/dogs-plant-list>

- Alocasia
- Aloe
- Amaryllis
- Asparagus Fern
- Azalea (florists type, left indoors)
- Begonia
- BULBS—such as narcissus, tulips, crocus, daffodils and hyacinths
- Caladium
- Ceriman (philodendrons & Dieffenbachia, both common & variegated varieties)
- Chrysanthemum (includes Daisies)
- Cyclamen
- Dracaena
- English Ivy (all varieties)
- Geranium
- Indian Rubber Plant (small indoor tree)
- Jade plant
- Kalanchoe
- Lilies (think "Easter", but all varieties)
- Marijuana
- Peace Lily
- Poinsettia
- Pothos (may also be referred to as philodendron, but different)
- Sago Palm
- Snake Plant or Mother-in-Law's tongue
- Spider Plant (green or variegated)

This list may not be complete for EVERY plant. Your pet's response to a plant may be unique—allergic, etc.

Cats, in particular can be more subject to ingestions as they may play with plants because of their curious nature. They may chew on plants simply to explore.

The safest route, if your pet refuses to leave a plant alone, even if it is a "safe plant" is to remove the plant from the pets' environment. The plant and your pet will be happier!

### Nursery Stock or Florist Arrangements

Purchased plants from florists or nurseries may also be treated with pesticides and/or chemicals to make them be disease free or "last longer" - it is always a good idea to NOT let your pet snack on these plant materials.

Common Symptoms of Toxic Plant Poisoning in Pets May Include:

- Mental dullness, decreased interaction, or hiding
- Severe irritation or ulceration of the mouth, lips, and tongue: Signs include a pawing at their mouth, decreased appetite, gagging, drooling, or bad breath
- Difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting, gagging, or retching
- Stomach pain: Signs of stomach pain might include decreased appetite, low energy, hiding, vomiting, and a decrease in urination and bowel movements
- Diarrhea
- Excessive drooling
- Changes in urine: This could be a change in color or change in the amount of urine (could be more or less)
- Changes in thirst (could be increased or decreased)
- Loss of appetite
- Low energy
- Tremor, seizures
- Coma

If you suspect that your pet has ingested a toxic plant, transport immediately to your veterinarian. Bring the plant to the office!!

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### Banana Tea Recipe

Take one banana – peel it.  
Cut the peel into  $\frac{1}{4}$ " slices  
Place in a heat proof dish or mug.  
Size does not matter. Toss the “stem”  
into your compost bucket.  
Fill with boiling water.  
Let sit for 1-2 hours or until cool.  
Strain out boiled peel.  
Add banana tea to an empty one gallon  
container. Add rainwater or spring wa-  
ter to fill the gallon container.  
Soak your NON-Blooming, “rested” or-  
chids in this solution for 1 hour.  
Can be repeated in four weeks, if no  
flower spikes have appeared.

