



Plant Tips Starter

-Constance Grace



1. Pick plants that work with your lifestyle.

A crazy busy work schedule, social life, and personal life can lead to plant neglect. Some plants can handle that kind of lifestyle. A jet-setter like yourself will enjoy the resilience of low-maintenance and drought-tolerant succulents, ZZ plants, or snake plants, all pretty low key, as long as they have enough light (bright and low light respectively). These should keep looking their best when you return from your next trip.

If you've got more time, you can try a few attention-loving air plants, orchids, or ferns. Like a mist for the face, an extra spritz of filtered water daily between waterings keeps humidity levels nice and balanced for these delicate plants.

2. Choose plants based on your light

Are the plants you love the ones you can have? Our #1 rule of (green) thumb is to determine the amount of natural light your space receives, and to choose your plant accordingly. If you're not sure just by looking, start by figuring out which direction your windows face.

Generally speaking, south-facing windows give bright light, east & west-facing windows give moderate light, and north-facing windows give low light. If there's something outside your window—for example, a large tree or building—that could obstruct sunlight, make sure to take that into consideration, too. Most houseplants prefer bright, indirect sunlight, but many can tolerate lower light levels (like low light tolerant snake plants and ZZ plants).

If the sun is intense through your windows, you may want to add a sheer curtain to diffuse the light. Cacti and some succulents like aloe can handle brighter, direct sunlight. You don't want to overexpose or underexpose any plant so keep an eye on them if they're in very bright or very low light.

3 .Raise humidity levels when needed

Staying true to your plant's natural environment will help your plant thrive indoors. Most tropical plants prefer high humidity and bright to moderate, indirect light. During the dry months of winter, grouping similar plants together helps to create a more humid microclimate. A humidifier can help too and it's great for humans (find more ways to increase humidity levels here). On the other hand, most desert dwellers like cacti and succulents prefer dry air and bright, direct light with no shade at all. They don't much care for humidity.

4. Always keep temperatures stable

Keep your plant's home environment as stable as possible. Extreme changes can stress plants out. Keep the temperature between 65 and 85 degrees F, and avoid placing your plants near radiators, A/C units, and forced-air vents, which can create hot or cold drafts.

5 . Be mindful when watering

It's better to under water your plants than to overwater. Too much water can lead to root rot. Ditch your watering schedule and water your plant only when it needs it. Check the potting mix or soil first to make sure it's dry at least 2 inches deep below the surface. If your soil looks dark in colour, feels moist, and sticks to your finger, your plant has enough water to do it's thing for now.

How often you water will also change throughout the year. Plants need less water in the winter months, when they're growing slower, the days are shorter and sunlight is less intense. If the heat is on and their soil is drying out quicker, they may need a bit more water. Wilting leaves or soil that looks pulled away from the sides of the planter are signs of a thirsty plant.

Always use warm water because it absorbs best. Pour water directly on the soil around the base of the plant, because plants absorb water from their roots. The only exception here is Epiphytes, like air plants, who absorb water through their leaves.

You can also place a saucer under your planter, if it has a drainage hole. After you water, let your plant soak up in access water that fills the saucer for a few hours before emptying it.

6. Know when to fertilize

Create a schedule when to fertilize. Too much fertilizer can do more harm than good. Houseplants tend to not need fertilizer as often as outdoor plants do. If you do choose to fertilize your plant, it's best to do so during the growing season (early spring to early fall) and follow the general rule of thumb: 'less is more'. Most store-bought fertilizers should be diluted with water before use.

If you have had your plant for at least year, you can fertilize it for the first time. We suggest using an all-purpose fertilizer. Always follow the instructions. If you've just changed the soil, skip the fertilizer! Fresh soil has enough new nutrients.

7. Treat plants with care

Once your plant has been delivered to your door or brought home from your local store, it will need a few weeks to adjust to its new environment. Show your plant a little extra attention in the beginning. Observing your plant will tell you when to water and when to not, if the temperature is too high or too low, and if it's getting enough sun. Plus they're so pleasing to look at.

8. Know when to repot

A common misconception, "repotting" does not necessarily mean putting your plant in a new planter, but rather, changing out your plant's soil with fresh potting mix to provide new nutrients. Plants typically need to be repotted every 12 to 18 months, depending on how actively they are growing. If your plant has outgrown its current planter, you can also use this as a time to size up. Choose a planter only 1 to 3 inches larger than its current container. The idea is that your plant is not swimming in soil, which may lead you to overwater, but has a little extra space to grow.

9. Make sure that there is drainage on the pot. If you tend to have a heavy hand when watering your plants, keep drainage in mind. You can opt for a planter with a drainage hole and saucer, keep your plant in a grow pot nestled inside a planter, or add lava rocks to the bottom of a planter without a hole (to create crevices for excess water to flow to). Do what works best for you! Don't be afraid to try different methods for different plants.

10. Shop from a reliable source

Purchase your plants from a reputable source like The Sill, your favourite local garden centre, and specialty stores or florists. Purchasing from a source with plant experts on-site means they can answer all your questions. Most people who sell or work with plants love talking about them. We definitely do.

If you're a first time plant parent, avoid large department stores and supermarkets where plants are usually stored in basements or dark warehouses. Check your plant out for yellow leaves, powdery mildew, strange spots, brown tips and weak stems as these are signs of an unhealthy plant.