



## *Time to Bring in Houseplants*

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The nights will be getting cooler now. You will need to bring your houseplants back inside. We sure have had interesting temperature ranges this summer season. How have your plants weathered their outdoor vacation? Did you even bring any outside this summer? I brought a few out which have done fairly well, much better than my indoor plants. My indoor plants usually get ignored in the summer since like many of you, I spend most of my time outdoors. As I bring in the outdoor plants, I will refresh them as well as my indoor. I will recap how to re-vamp them with information from a previous newsletter (actually my very 1st one). Repotting is very important

with the plants that have been growing outside. Their root system should be strong and crowded. Indoor plants that have not been repotted for a long time could use fresh potting soil going into winter with the dry heat in most homes. You will also want to make sure you are not bringing in any insects in to infect your indoor plants.



With that being said, check your indoor plants before you bring in the others just in case those are the trouble makers. I will inform you on all of this and more.

*Patty*

### • Tropical Hibiscus



## *Tropical Hibiscus*

Hibiscus can be stored in a frost free place over winter. They shouldn't go completely dormant though. You will still have to water it to keep the soil slightly moist. Also, I wouldn't cut the plant all the way back, leave most of the growth unless the plant is too big to take in. If you don't have any other choice it won't hurt to prune it a little smaller. Your plant will do much better with lots of light. I keep two of mine in a south-

west and west window for the winter. The third one I put in the basement and let it go semi-dormant. It's not something I recommend as having a very good success rate. It takes a lot longer for that one to recover. But I don't have the space for all of them as I have many other favorites to bring in. On the other hand, if you leave it outside it will die for sure!

## *Saving Elephant Ears Colocasia, Alocasia and Caladiums*

These can be brought in but you will have to check them often for spider-mites. They don't like dry homes and the spidermites think it's perfect for them.

Put them in a sunny spot and don't let the soil dry out. Alocasia can take a little less sun. As long as the plant continues to produce new leaves, apply a diluted liquid fertilizer (half strength). The main problem with indoors will be giving Colocasia enough humidity. You can use a humidity tray made up of pebbles with water in the pebbles then just set the plant on top. In the spring be sure to harden it off (over a week gradually ex-

pose it to direct sun and wind) before putting it on the patio or planting it in the ground after your last frost. Dig caladium tubers before your first freeze, with their foliage. Lay the plants out on old newspapers in a garage or other protected place. When the foliage is dry, remove it and store the tubers in peat moss or coconut coir. If you grew them in pots, you can leave them in their pots for storage. In spring, sprinkle a little compost (worm casting are my favorite) or fresh soil and use a slow release organic fertilizer on top of the soil in the pot, and set out in the garden for summer color.



## *Repotting Houseplants (Is it Time to repot?)*

When the plant is too large for the pot, your plant will start looking like it wants to tip over. You will try to use something to keep it from doing that but nothing seems to work. This is a good time to repot. Here are more good signs that your plant needs repotting.

\* When root start sticking out of the top and the bottom of the pot.

\*If your plant just don't look as happy as at used to and you have never repotted it.

\*Sometimes when you purchase a new plant it needs repotting. You might know this if the plant wilts every time you go to water it and you know you just watered it a few days ago. The place you bought it from might not have repotted it from the time they received it or first grew it.

### **Here are some important steps in re-potting:**

\* Lightly tap the plant out of the pot. If you can't get the plant out of the pot you might have to break it.

\*If you find the roots are matted, gently loosen them. If the roots are hard to pull, you might have to cut them in a few spots, then pull – called scoring.

\*Replant into a container only 1" to 2" larger than the original. Use any kind of pot as long as it has good drainage. Clay pots absorbs extra water, plastic pots hold it in. So if

you tend to over water your plants use a clay pot.

\*Use cheese cloth, old nylons or landscape fabric to keep

pests from entering the drainage hole.

\* Use a top quality houseplant potting soil and add some worm castings to the soil.

Water thoroughly after transplanting.

Patty's Plants does offer this service. There are many good potting soils to choose from but we do carry the best on the planet. Happy Frog and Ocean Forest by Fox Farm is awesome. It not only makes plants happy, it makes my customers happy too! Those of you who have tried it will agree.

Perfect for houseplants and container gardens inside and out, FoxFarm's Happy Frog Potting Soil creates an ideal root-zone environment and promotes phenomenal growth rates. This great organic mix contains composted forest humus, Sphagnum peat, perlite, earthworm castings, bat guano, mycorrhizae and humic acids derived from leonardite. Oyster shells and dolomitic lime are also included to stabilize pH. Happy Frog Potting Soil is fine-screened, light in texture and ready to use right from the bag.



## Why you should Clean and Wash your Plants

Washing, dusting your houseplants! Why? You probably think you have enough to clean & dust. So why would you want to clean plants. It doesn't take long for dust to accumulate on furniture, curtains, blinds and knick-knacks especially in the winter. Plants are no different, they get dusty too. It's actually more important to clean your plants if you want to keep them in good health. One reason is: plants take care of us and our health by removing toxins in our air caused by various things like household cleaner fumes,

new carpet smells etc. They turn them into nutrients to help them grow without any harm to themselves. The other reason is : they can't grow if the dust is blocking the sunlight. They need sunlight to photosynthesize, that's how they feed themselves. Without it the plant becomes stressed and a stressed plant is more susceptible to insects and diseases. So by dusting or washing them your plant will be happier and healthier. This sounds like a lot of work initially but it really will help your plants in the long run.



## How To Safely Wash Your Houseplants

The first step in a good cleaning is to wipe down the pots to remove dirt and/or salt buildup. When dusting the plants be careful over cleaning can remove important cells that are necessary to the health of the plant, so wipe gently. To clean the leaves of:

Large accent plants:

Use two sponges or put an old pair of socks on, one for each hand. Dip them in a bucket of warm soapy water. Gently wipe down both sides of the leaf.

Smaller plants: Use luke warm water and put the plants either in the sink or the shower. Dip the plants in soapy warm water.

Use a plastic bag to cover the pot to keep the soil in. Add 1/4 t. dish soap per qt. of water to spray the dust or insects off.

Fuzzy Leaves  
For plants like  
African Violets  
use a soft

Once plants are clean, you can use a disposable duster or old socks to keep the dust from building up.

Add shine with a commercial plant-shine product.

1- Hold the spray bottle about a foot above the plant and spray a fine mist over the leaves.

2- Never spray plant shine products on the underside of leaves. Specialized stomata cells on the bottom of leaves could be damaged.

3-Do not spray in the sun. This could also damage the leaves. Let the plant dry in the shade.

4-Do not use any shine product to frequently so as not to clog the pores of the plant.

5- If you prefer not to use a commercial leaf shine product, my grandmother always shined her plants with milk. We also carry a natural leaf cleaner with citrus oil natural soap and veggie oil in it.

## Plants need light

Now that you have repotted and cleaned your plants, you need did to place them in good lighting. Some will tolerate very low light. But in winter you need as much light as possible. Most people don't have enough light inside to make plants really happy. Signs of prolonged low light are weak long, and pale growth. The plants will

bend towards the light source.

Use artificial light if you have no other place other than low light to put your plants. Do not use plain old light bulbs. They must be florescent or special plant lights. Four to six hours of supplemental light will help. Place plants at least 2-3 ft away so they won't burn.



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**Is there a special way to keep your geraniums over winter?**

Many people try to keep their geraniums over winter with varying results. You can bring your plants indoors leaving them in their pots by pruning them back to 8-10". Or overwintering them on a bench in the basement under a light with a timer set for 8-10 hours a day. Only water when they seem really dry.

**Can the geraniums be dug up and just stored in the basement?**

Most people had a root cellar in their basements back in the day. My customers always said, "Their grandma used to do it". She probably had a root cellar. Now, most basements are too warm and too dry for this to work. The plants can be dug and kept in some type of container or enclosure which will keep the humidity up and hopefully keep the temperature down. But if you want to try, just shake the soil from roots & hang upside down in 40-50\* area. Once a month soak the roots in water or mist 2-3 times a month.

**Will geraniums over winter as house plants?**

Yes, if you have a good sunny location the geraniums can be grown as houseplants for the winter. They might become leggy if they don't have enough light, You can cut them back to keep them bushier. Remember to keep them on the dry side. Geraniums do not like to be over watered.

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## *Meaning of Light Levels for Indoor Plants*



Is this a low light area?  
YES

Every one who has written books or reports on plants has a different term when talking about light levels. They tend to use their favorite. Is it sunlight, bright light, medium or lowlight? Or is it shady, filtered, intense, indirect, or reflected? Let me try to make it easy for all of us.

**LOW LIGHT**-This is an area where you could read comfortably, but isn't much brighter. It's an area located toward the middle of the room with west or south windows, near a north window, or an east corner of the room. There isn't any sunlight directly on the plants. A few plants will tolerate

it for months and even years, if taken care of correctly.

**MEDIUM LIGHT**- Areas with lots of artificial lights on all day ,like an office. A east window or a light curtained window of a west or south area. A very bright room where the plant is placed several feet from a sunny window.

**HIGH LIGHT**- Plants that need 5-6 hours of direct sun on them and then bright light the rest of the day. This would be southeast, south and southwest. Most of your flowering patio plants that you bring in for the winter would be in this category.