



May Tips

INTERIOR GARDENING

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- When placing your indoor plants outdoors in your flower borders during the summer, clay pots can be set directly in the ground so the soil is 1 to 2 inches below the pot rim, allowing moisture to go through the porous clay. If your plants are in plastic or glazed containers, repot them in to clay containers or check frequently for water because moisture will not move through the plastic.
- Adding fertilizer to a dry root ball bums the roots, damaging or killing the plant, so water dry houseplants before fertilizing and NEVER fertilize wilted plants.
- Maidenhair ferns need at least 50 percent humidity and grow well in a terrarium. You also can group ferns around an aquarium to raise the humidity around the plants.
- Once established on a house plant, powdery mildew is very difficult eradicate. If there are only a few spots (gray or white, fuzzy looking), pick off and destroy the affected leaves. If the problem is more serious, the best answer may be to get rid of the plant before the fungus disease spreads to other plants. Powdery mildew is caused by stale, moist air and too much water. Provide better ventilation or use a small fan to circulate the air. Cut down on the watering.
- For an unusual house plant, try water lettuce (*Pistia stratiotes*). Float its perfect rosette of fuzzy, greenish-yellow leaves in a container of water about 12 inches square and 5 to 9 inches deep. Give it part sun and temperatures over 60 degrees F, and fertilize with a high-phosphorous, water-soluble fertilizer at one-quarter strength every three weeks in summer, every six weeks in winter. Change the water every two to three months, and as new plants arise from runners, remove the old ones to make room.
- Divide indoor plants when new growth starts in spring. Root cuttings during spring and summer when the plant is actively growing.
- Vacation hint: Sink house plants, pots and all, in the soil in a shady area of the garden. Mulch to reduce the need for frequent watering.
- House plants in containers without drainage holes are poor candidates for outside. A rainstorm may drown and rot them. All plants perform better in containers with drainage holes.
- The mother fern (*Asplenium bulbiferum*), so-called because it produces plantlets on its fronds, is exceptionally tolerant of dry air in the home. It does well at 30 percent humidity. For homes with 50 percent humidity, button ferns (*Pellaea rotundifolia*) are an excellent choice.
- Move your house plants outdoors when the night temperatures stay above 50°F.
- Avoid sunburning the foliage by moving the plants gradually from the relative darkness of the house to their bright, summer location. Start by putting them in a well- shaded location and progressing to increasingly lighted areas.
- If you plant your Easter lily outdoors, it may flower again in late August.

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