

Holiday Stress on Interior Plants?

You may think it's crazy that we have to consider any type of special care for plants that stay in the house all year long, but we do, especially in the winter! Indoor plants are most commonly tropical foliage plants acclimated to environmental conditions with little to moderate change. The environmental conditions I want you to consider are light, temperature and relative humidity (moisture). If any of these conditions are suddenly changed (by turning on the heat or moving a plant into a different location) a plant may become stressed and unhealthy looking. A stressed plant can become a sick plant because it is more susceptible to pests and diseases.

Reducing stress for over-wintering interior plants is easy to achieve. Keep in mind maintaining the three major environmental factors is very important.

Light: Some plants may need to be moved to locations where there is more light availability. Avoid placing them in indirect sunlight, especially in southern windows. Leaf scorch is often found on foliage closest to window glass. Don't place plants in a brighter location than they were in during the rest of the year.

Temperature: Now that it has gotten colder outside, we want to keep the inside warm and cozy. Keeping your plants away from heating vents and drafty spaces will reduce plant problems caused by temperature variations.

Relative Humidity: Heating systems tend to circulate dry air throughout the house. Houseplants need a certain amount of moisture in the air to respire properly. There are several ways to keep air moisture levels up around plants. You can place the plant in an "evaporation pan" made out of a tray or baking pan with rocks or stones. Put the pot on top of the stones and pour water into the pan. Make sure that your water level stays below the pot. This water is for the air around the plants not for the roots. Be sure you are not letting your plants sit in water this can cause root rot. You can also hand mist plants with a spray bottle. Cleaning foliage with water and a soft cloth can also help. This takes dirt off of the stomata (pores) to open them up optimal breathing.

Some other things to consider for winter plant health are that the plants are probably using less water because there is less light and less energy producing food. Moisture root moisture by touching it. If the soil feels really wet don't water. You want soil to be a little on the dry side for most indoor plants.