

houseplants care guide

Syngonium
'Arrow'
(Arrowhead plant)

sarahraven.com



Bring life, colour and greenery to your home with our new and extended range of houseplants. Indoor plants in colourful pots not only enhance the appearance of a room but can also boost your mood and improve air quality.

Whether you choose flowering houseplants, trailing plants to position on shelves or hang from the ceiling, large plants to add drama and structure, or small pots for your desk or bedside, a houseplant will bring a little of the outside, in.

Sarah

contents

- 3-4** How to grow
- 5** Pests, Repotting & Pets
- 6-16** Houseplants

Key



IDEAL LOCATION



CARE



RATE OF GROWTH



PET FRIENDLY



CAUTION FOR PETS

Photography by Jonathan Buckley ©

How to grow

Most houseplants come from warm, semi-shaded places around the world, meaning they're well suited to the temperatures and light levels in our homes.

LIGHT the majority of houseplants want good light to keep them growing, but not direct midday or afternoon sun which can scorch their leaves.

TOP TIP:

- Wiping dust off leaves with a damp cloth will keep them clean and shiny and enable them to absorb more light for photosynthesis.

POSITION away from cold draughts or very warm radiators. Fluctuations between the two in winter can be very stressful for plants, causing leaves to turn yellow or brown or fall.

- In sunny, west or south-facing rooms, place plants on a table or shelf away from the window.
- In shadier, north or east-facing rooms, plants will be happy on the windowsill.
- In winter when there is little sun, you can move all plants closer to windows.
- In the height of summer, when nights are reliably warm, most houseplants love a holiday in the garden so place them outside in a sheltered but shady spot for a week or more.

TEMPERATURE the optimum range for most houseplants is between 15°C and 25°C.

WATERING how often you water will depend on the size of your plant and pot, the time of year and the room temperature. See individual plant information for details. You may need to water as often as every other day in summer and as infrequently as once a month in winter.

TOP TIPS

1. Overwatering and underwatering of houseplants is a common challenge when growing and is something to be mindful of.
2. To judge the right time to water, you will need to look at the surface of the compost. You can also lift the pot to feel whether it is light (dry) or heavy (moist). For some plants it's best to push your finger into the compost down to the first knuckle to feel if there is still moisture below the surface.
3. If you have access to rainwater from a clean water butt rather than tap water, this is ideal for your plants. If using tap water, you can fill a bottle and allow it to stand for 24 hours before using it, so any chemicals can evaporate. It's also best if water is tepid, not icy cold.



Goepertia concinna (Calathea)



Platycerium bifurcatum (Common staghorn fern)

THE PERFECT SPOT many houseplants like a humid environment, so if grown in a bathroom or kitchen, they will be very happy. If grown in a room where radiators are frequently on, the air can become dry, which risks leaves discolouring or falling.

TOP TIPS

1. To combat drying, you can spritz leaves weekly with water using a fine mister.
2. Standing plants in a wide tray of pebbles with a little water in it helps to keep the air around them moist.

FEEDING most houseplants like to be fed every 2-4 weeks between March and September when they are growing. Use a liquid feed diluted with water.

- Specialist houseplant fertilisers are high in nitrogen which is great for leafy growth.
- Fast-growing plants tend to need to be fed more often than slow-growing ones.
- Ferns (Adiantum, Asplenium, Platycerium and Phlebodium) and succulents like Sansevieria need less nutrients so only feed once a month and dilute the fertiliser more.

PLANT SOS watch out for browning, yellowing or wilting leaves. If a plant looks stressed in this way, it usually comes down to watering or light levels.

WHAT TO DO first check that the plant isn't dried out or sitting in water. Next check the position of the plant and ensure it isn't being scorched by sun or sitting in deep shade.

- If it's very dry, stand it in a sink of water for 30mins to rehydrate.
- If it's soggy, ensure drainage is OK and hold off watering until the compost begins to dry out.
- If you move a plant to a new position, it will usually take a few weeks before the plant begins to adapt and you can see signs of recovery.

4 See sarahraven.com for our full range of plants, bulbs and seedlings

Pests

There are a handful of pests that can be a problem for your houseplants. Spotting them early and isolating the affected plant from others is important.

- Scale insects - the first sign of these is usually a sticky substance on the leaves, then you may notice the little shell-like bumps on stems and veins. They can be scraped off with your nail and a damp cloth.
- Mealybugs - also excrete a sticky substance and produce a fluffy white wax on stems and leaves (or sometimes roots). Clean them off as soon as you see them.
- Fungus gnats - little flies that can be seen crawling around the compost or pot. They are annoying but rarely do much damage to plants. They like wet compost so allow the surface of the compost to dry out slightly and clean up any you can see.

Standing affected plants outside for a few weeks in summer can really help them shake off pests.

Repotting

It's a good idea to repot plants every 1-3 years in spring. This gives you the opportunity to change the compost and ensure the roots have space to thrive.

HOW TO

- Always use a pot with a drainage hole in the bottom. You can place this inside a pot with no holes but make sure there is enough space for excess water to drain out and evaporate.
- Use peat-free, multipurpose compost, loam-based compost or specialist houseplant compost.
- If potting on, simply choose a container that is about one third bigger than the one the plant is coming out of.
- Some plants can have their root ball split apart. You can then replant one half in the same container and pot up the other half in a new pot (they make great presents!)
- If plants become too large and unmanageable to repot, you can top dress them instead. This means removing the surface of the compost and adding a layer of fresh compost. Mature plants which have been in the same pot for many years will also need extra water and feed.

Pets

While most pets won't be tempted to eat houseplants, for complete confidence we've identified those which are pet-friendly and those which can be toxic if eaten. If your pet has a habit of chewing things, aim to place ones that might be toxic out of their reach.



Curly

TLC Ratings

All the houseplants we sell have been chosen to thrive with basic tender loving care. Of course some are a little fussier than others so here's our rating:

- 1 Very easy
- 2 Easy
- 3 A little fussy

Adiantum raddianum 'Fragrantissimum' (Maidenhair fern)



Loves a bright spot but not in direct sun or the heat from a radiator.



Keep moist at all times but not soggy or sitting in water. If the compost does dry out and fronds die, don't worry – simply cut back, water well and wait for new growth to appear.



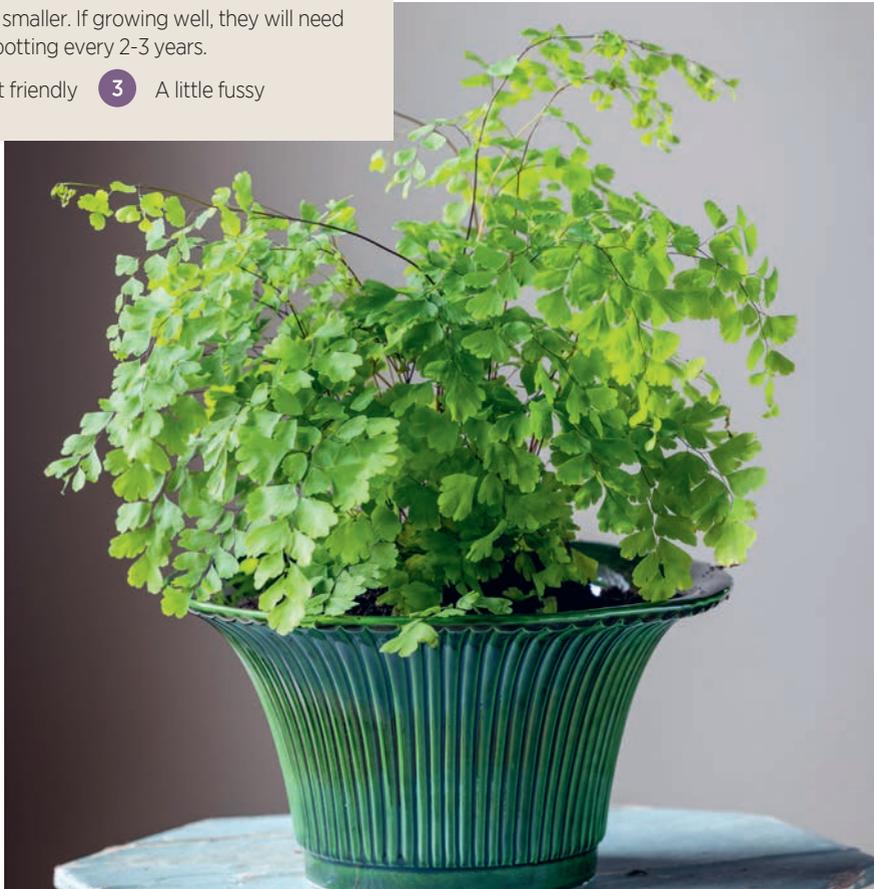
A healthy plant can reach 75cm high and wide but it is common for them to be a lot smaller. If growing well, they will need repotting every 2-3 years.



Pet friendly **3** A little fussy

“You can't go wrong with the classic maidenhair fern. It reminds me of a fine lace curtain, its black stems like the thread linking the pattern of leaves. It can't fail to be pretty wherever you put it.”

Sarah Raven



Alocasia x amazonica 'Polly' (Elephant's ear)



Best in a light and warm room, away from direct sun in summer and cold draughts in winter.



Keep the compost just moist. Loves a humid bathroom or kitchen. If grown elsewhere, mist leaves or sit the plant in a tray of damp pebbles.



Plants can reach 1.5m tall and almost as wide, with huge leaves. Large plants can be divided when repotting.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



Aspidistra have been grown in British homes since Victorian times & are incredibly tolerant of neglect.



Aspidistra elatior (Cast iron plant)



Very tolerant of shade so ideal for a sunless room. Fine in bright light too but avoid direct hot sun.



Easy! Try to keep the compost moist but not soggy and don't worry if you occasionally forget to water it.



Typically, about 60cm tall and 45cm wide. Does not grow fast and does not like repotting, so wait until absolutely necessary (about every 3 years) and split before replanting.



Pet friendly **1** Very easy



Asplenium nidus (Bird's nest fern)



Like all ferns, these do best if placed in indirect light (a north or east-facing windowsill is ideal) away from the heat of radiators.



Keep compost just moist but not soggy. Grow in a humid bathroom, mist fronds or place pot on a tray of pebbles and water.



Asplenium can grow to 90cm or more once mature. Young plants may need repotting every year or two.



Pet friendly **2** Easy

Begonia 'Gryphon'



This begonia will be happiest near a north or east-facing window. Keep it away from any direct sun. You can stand it in a shaded spot outside in summer.



Ensure the compost remains just moist in summer but allow to dry out a little between watering in winter.



A compact, bushy plant which usually reaches about 45cm tall and wide. They can be pruned back if they get leggy. Repot every 2-3 years.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



Epipremnum aureum (Devil's ivy)



Loves a well-lit spot that doesn't get direct summer sun.



Water just as the compost begins to dry out, which might be once a week in summer but far less in winter. Mist the leaves occasionally.



Can grow to 1.5m or more. Pinch back stems for bushiness, allow to trail down a shelf or provide a mossy pole for them to climb up. Repot when they get cramped.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



Ficus elastica 'Tineke' (Rubber plant) & Ficus lyrata (Fiddle leaf fig)



Happiest in a sunny room with no cold draughts.



Make sure the compost dries out slightly between watering as overwatering is the most common problem with these plants. Clean the leaves occasionally to remove dust.



May grow to 1.8m tall or more but the main stem can be pruned, if necessary, which will result in bushy side shoots. Repot every 2-3 years until too large to handle.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



The rubber plant and fiddle leaf fig can both get really tall & statuesque.



Goeppertia concinna (syn. Calathea leopardina) & Goeppertia veitchiana 'Medaillon' (Rose-painted calathea)



Calatheas need to be kept in light shade, away from direct sun, cold draughts or hot air from radiators.



Keep the compost just moist but not soggy. Mist plants and/or stand on pebble trays.



Rarely grows above 60cm high and 45cm wide. Repot every 2-3 years.



Pet friendly **2** Easy



Howea forsteriana (Kentia palm)



Tolerant of some shade so ideal for a north or east-facing room. Keep out of direct sun.



Easy! Try to water regularly, keeping the compost just moist but make sure the pot drains so the roots don't get soggy.



Can grow to 1.8cm tall and 1.2m wide if happy. Repot only when plant is completely pot bound as they dislike disturbance.



Pet friendly **1** Very easy



Monstera deliciosa (Swiss cheese plant)



Likes a well-lit place out of direct summer sun.



Let compost dry slightly between waterings. Wipe dust from leaves.



Can reach 1.8m tall or more and about 90cm wide. Needs a support to climb up (a mossy stick is ideal for aerial roots to root into). Grows fast and will need repotting every 2 years.



Caution for pets **2** Easy

Philodendron scandens 'Micans' (Sweetheart plant)



Best in a well-lit place out of direct sun but will tolerate shade too.



Keep the compost moist with generous watering in summer but less in winter.



Can reach 1.2m or more. Train up a support or leave it to trail. Stems can be trimmed back if they outgrow the space.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



Philodendron aureum 'Blue Star' (Golden polypody)



Likes a well-lit room, in a spot that doesn't get hot afternoon sun. Keep away from radiators and cold draughts.



Keep moist at all times but not soggy or sitting in water. If it's not in a humid bathroom, mist frequently and/or sit it on a tray of pebbles with water.



Usually grows to about 60cm tall and wide. Repot when plant looks overcrowded, splitting it in two if needed.



Pet friendly **2** Easy



Pilea peperomioides (Chinese money plant)



Enjoys a room with plenty of natural light but not a position in direct summer sun.



Allow the surface of the compost to dry out between watering.



Usually grows to about 30cm high and wide. Pot on as it outgrows its pot and/or remove offsets to make new plants.



Pet friendly **1** Very easy



Pilea is a top choice for your desk or bedside table.



Platycerium bifurcatum (Common staghorn fern)



Enjoys plenty of light but dislikes direct sun and cold draughts.



Allow the compost to dry out slightly between watering. When you do water try standing the pot in water for 10 minutes. Loves a humid atmosphere so grow in a bathroom or mist often.



60-90cm tall and wide. Slow growing but may need repotting every 1-3 years. Rusty-brown spores forming on the leaves are nothing to worry about, just a natural part of its lifecycle.



Pet friendly **2** Easy

Sansevieria trifasciata var. laurentii (Variegated snake plant)



Sansevieria is best grown in a sunny spot but will tolerate shade.



Super easy! Just let the compost dry out slightly between watering and water very little in winter.



Can reach 1m tall but grows slowly and so won't need repotting more than every three years.



Caution for pets **1** Very easy



Syngonium 'Arrow' (Nephthytis or Arrowhead plant)



Best in a well-lit spot away from any direct sun.



These plants must be kept just moist at all times but never soggy. Mist the leaves often if the room is not humid.



Typically reaches about 75cm high and can be trimmed back if it becomes leggy. May need repotting every two years.



Caution for pets **2** Easy



Zamioculcas zamiifolia (ZZ plant)



Enjoys a bright position out of direct sun but will tolerate shade too.



Overwatering is the main cause of problems so do allow the surface of the compost to dry out between watering.



Slow growing and rarely reaches above 1m tall and half as wide. Repot once overcrowded.



Caution for pets

1

Very Easy

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