

Guide to Selecting Houseplants

Anne M. Streich, Extension Horticulture Educator

This NebGuide provides a list of houseplants to help you choose the ones best suited to your home.

Success in growing flowering or foliage houseplants largely depends on your skill, knowledge of the plant material and the time you want to invest in it. In addition, site selection and cultural practices are also very important. Some houseplants are relatively easy to grow and are easily adaptable, like the cast iron plant. Other plants, like nerve plant, are difficult to grow because of their high moisture and humidity requirements.

The following list will help you select an appropriate houseplant for your home. First you must determine where you want to place the plant in your home and then note the environmental conditions (available light, humidity and temperature) of that location. These are general requirements and may need to be adjusted depending on the type of soil and pot that you use. As light intensity is reduced during the winter months, a decrease in temperature and moisture also is desirable for plant health. In addition, some plants require cooler temperatures during the winter to initiate flower buds.

Water: M — keep uniformly moist, growing media kept moist to touch but not saturated with water
 I — intermediate, after watering allow soil to feel dry to touch before rewatering
 D — dry out between waterings, periods of soaking between which the soil should be completely dry

Humidity: L — low 25% to 30% (average home)
 M — medium 30% to 50%
 H — high, above 50%

Light: H — high; place near sunlit window or an area that has strong reflected/indirect light; indirect exposure to a west window, long hours of good light from a south window
 M — medium; place in well lit area out of direct sun or in an area with a sheer curtain between the plant and sunlight, north facing window seal or 4 to 8 feet away from window; indirect or filtered sunlight; a close, direct exposure to a north or east window; two to four hours of sun a day
 L — low; place more than 8 feet away from window; filtered light from a small window across the room; light from a shaded window; filtered light to a north window; light reflected around a wall, indirect yet strong enough to cast a shadow

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Botanical Name</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Humidity</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Night Temp. Min. (°F)</i>
Bromeliads					
-Earth Stars	<i>Cryptanthus</i>	M	M	M	50-55
-Living Vase	<i>Aechmea</i>	I	M	M	55-62
-Pineapple	<i>Ananas</i>	I	M	H	50-55
-Air Plant	<i>Tillandsia</i>	Soil-less	M	L	50-55

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Botanical Name</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Humidity</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Night Temp. Min. (°F)</i>
Cactus					
-Barrel Cacti	<i>Ferocactus</i>	D	L-M	H	62-65
-Candelabra Cacti	<i>Euphorbia</i>	D	L	H	62-65
-Chin Cacti	<i>Gymnocalycium</i>	I	L	H	55
-Christmas Cacti	<i>Schlumbergera bridgesii</i>	M	M-H	M-H	55-65
-Easter Cacti	<i>Rhipsalidopsis gaertneri</i>	M	M-H	M-H	55-65
-Hedgehog cacti	<i>Echinocactus, Lobivia, Rebutia</i>	D	L	H	62-65
-Pincushion cacti	<i>Mammillaria</i>	D	L	H	62-65
-Prickly Pears	<i>Opuntia</i>	D	L	H	62-65
-Thanksgiving Cacti	<i>Zygocactus truncatus</i>	M	M-H	M-H	55-65
-Torch Cacti	<i>Trichocereus</i>	D	L	H	62-65
Ferns					
-Asparagus Fern	<i>Asparagus setaceus</i>	M	M-H	M	55-65
-Birdnest Fern	<i>Asplenium nidus</i>	M	M	L-M	55-65
-Staghorn Fern	<i>Platynerium</i>	M	H	M	55-65
-Sword Fern	<i>Nephrolepis</i>	M	M-H	M	50-55
-Boston Fern	<i>Adiantum</i>	M	M-H	M	55-65
Figs					
-Weeping Fig	<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	D	M-H	M-H	62-65
-Creeping Fig	<i>Ficus pumila</i>	M	M	M-H	62-65
-Fiddle Leaf Fig	<i>Ficus lyrata</i>	I	M	M-H	62-65
-Indian Laurel	<i>Ficus retusa nitida</i>	M	M	M	62-65
-Rubber Plant	<i>Ficus elastica</i>	I	L-M	H	62-65
Ivy					
-Grape Ivy	<i>Cissus rhombifolia</i>	I	M	M	50-55
-English Ivy	<i>Hedra helix</i>	I	M	M-H	45-50
-Kangaroo Ivy	<i>Cissus antarctica</i>	I	M	M	50-55
-German Ivy	<i>Senecio mikanioides</i>	I	M	M-H	50-60
-Swedish Ivy	<i>Plectranthus australis</i>	I	M	M	50-55
Palms					
-Bamboo Palm	<i>Chamaedorea erumpens</i>	M	L	L	62-65
-Kentia Palm	<i>Howea forsterana</i>	I	M	M	50-55
-Lady Palm	<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	M	M	M	50-55
-Ponytail Palm	<i>Beaucarnea recurvata</i>	I	M	H	50-55
Other Houseplants					
-African Violet	<i>Saintpaulia ionantha</i>	I	H	M-H	60-65
-Aloe	<i>Aloe</i>	D	M	H	50-55
-Aluminum Plant	<i>Pilea cadierei</i>	I	M	M	60-65
-Amaryllis	<i>Hippeastrum</i>	I	M	M-H	50-55
-Artillery Plant	<i>Pilea microphylla</i>	I	M-H	M	60-65

<i>Common Name</i>	<i>Botanical Name</i>	<i>Water</i>	<i>Humidity</i>	<i>Light</i>	<i>Night Temp. Min. (°F)</i>
-Burro's Tail	<i>Sedum morganianum</i>	D	M	H	50-60
-Cast Iron Plant	<i>Aspidistra elatior</i>	M	M	L-M	45-50
-Chinese Evergreen	<i>Aglaonema commutatum</i>	I	L-M	L	60-65
-Croton	<i>Codiaeum</i>	I	H	H	60-65
-Cyclamen	<i>Cyclamen persicum</i>	I	H	H	50-55
-Dieffenbachia or Dumbcane	<i>Dieffenbachia</i>	I	M	M	60-65
-Dragon Lilies	<i>Dracaena</i>	M	M	L-M	62-65
-Episcia, Flame Violet	<i>Episcia</i>	M	H	H	60-65
-False Aralia	<i>Dizygotheca elegantissima</i>	M	M	M	60-65
-Hawaiian Ti	<i>Cordyline terminalis</i>	M	H	M	62-65
-Jade Plant	<i>Crassula arborescens</i>	D	L-M	H	50-55
-Kalanchoe	<i>Kalanchoe</i>	D	L-M	H	50-60
-Moses in the Cradle	<i>Rhoeo spathacea</i>	I	M	M	50-55
-Nerve Plant	<i>Fittonia verschaffeltii</i>	M	H	M	62-65
-Norfolk Island Pine	<i>Araucaria heterophylla</i>	I	M	M-H	50-55
-Pathos	<i>Epipremnum aurea</i>	M	M	L-M-H	60-65
-Peacock Plant	<i>Calathea makoyana</i>	I	M-H	M	60-65
-Peperomia	<i>Peperomia</i>	M	M	M	60-65
-Philodendron	<i>Philodendron</i>	M	M	M	50-55
-Prayer Plant	<i>Maranta leuconeura</i>	M	M-H	M	62-65
-Schefflera	<i>Brassaia</i>	D	M	M	55-65
-Snake Plant or Mother-in-laws Tongue	<i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i>	I-M	M	M	62-65
-Peace Lily	<i>Spathiphyllum</i>	M	M-H	M	60-65
-Spider Plant	<i>Chlorophytum comosum</i>	I	M	M	50-55
-Strawberry Geranium	<i>Saxifraga stolonifera</i>	I	M	H	50-55
-Velvet Plant	<i>Gynura aurantiaca</i>	I	M	M-H	62-65
-Wandering Jew	<i>Tradescantia, Zebrina</i>	I	M	M-H	50-60
-Zebra Plant	<i>Aphelandra squarrosa</i>	M	H	H	55-60

UNL Extension publications are available online
at <http://extension.unl.edu/publications>.

Index: Horticulture Ornamentals

1987, Revised 2001, Revised October 2007

Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln
cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.

University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies
of the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.