



# Ten Tough Houseplants

Want a houseplant that you would have a hard time killing even if you tried? Then try one of the following plants. Even folks who claim to have black thumbs will enjoy these easy-care, easy-going tropicals. We've included a basic houseplant care section for tips on keeping houseplants happy. And, if you're ready to graduate to other plants, refer to the plant list at the end of the handout.



Dracaena

## Light Requirements - a definition of terms

Use these guidelines when choosing plants for various light situations.

**LOW LIGHT** - Interior parts of rooms especially north and east facing rooms or areas such as hallways. No direct sun.

**MEDIUM LIGHT** - North or east facing window areas or interiors of south facing rooms. Minimal direct sun.

**BRIGHT LIGHT** - Areas near west and south windows that may have some direct sun.

**HIGH LIGHT/DIRECT SUN** - Much direct sun from a south facing window or sun room or greenhouse.

## Ten Tough Houseplants

**Arrowhead** (*Nephtytis*) - Arrowhead shaped leaves in green, light bronze, or bronzy-pink. Prefers low to medium light. Water when soil feels dry.

**Calathea spp.** - Large rounded leaves sport markings of green, white, and pink. Backs of leaves are deep burgundy. Place in medium to bright light. Can tolerate low light as well. Keep evenly moist in spring and summer, but let it dry between waterings in fall and winter.

**Chinese Evergreen** (*Aglaonema spp.*) - A pretty plant with wide, lance-shaped leaves that are usually silver-green with darker green central veins and margins. Tolerates low light and low humidity, even rooms with no windows. Provide regular water and feed monthly during spring and summer.

**Corn Plant** (*Dracaena fragrans*) - Low-light, low maintenance, and low moisture requirements make this houseplant a no-brainer. Lance-shaped, green or variegated leaves grouped along one or two central trunks, reminiscent of the habit of real corn plants. Narrowness makes it ideal for corners and tight spots. Leaves of 'Janet Craig' cultivar are usually full from top to bottom. Best if watered with rainwater.

**Dumbcane** (*Dieffenbachia spp.*) - A bright, cheery plant with broad, oblong leaves usually variegated green and gold or green and silver. Needs medium to high light. Water when soil feels dry and feed monthly during spring and summer.

**Peace Lily** (*Spathiphyllum*) - Glossy, lance-shaped leaves with white calla-like blooms. Place in low to medium light. Keep soil evenly moist. Won't complain if you mist it now and then, too.

**Philodendron** - A low maintenance plant if we ever saw one. You can practically ignore it and it plugs right along. Prefers low to medium light. Water when the soil feels dry. Lush leaves are bright green or variegated white and green or yellow and green. Some types are compact, others trail and make great hanging plants.

**Pothos** (*Epipremnum aureum*) - A very similar plant to trailing philodendron in both physical resemblance and care except that best color is achieved with medium light. Teardrop shaped leaves are splashed with white or yellow. Great as a hanging plant.

**Snake Plant** (*Sansevieria*) - This is one tough customer. These can be found happily growing in situations that have other plants shriveling up and crying for their mommies. Upright, sword-shaped leaves in dark green or dark green with a gold margin. Prefers low to medium light and wouldn't mind a feeding during spring or summer. Water no

more than once a month.

**Umbrella Tree** (*Schefflera aboricola*) - Lovely as a small indoor tree or can be grown as a bush. Easy to maintain, prune, etc. Prefers medium to bright light. The brighter the better, especially for variegated varieties. Let it go slightly dry between waterings. Loves humidity.

### **Caring for houseplants:**

- Place plants according to light preferences: low, medium, or high.
- Always use good quality potting soils that allow air and water to easily penetrate.
- Do not feed in winter. During spring and summer, use a fertilizer designed for houseplants.
- Don't let pots sit in saucers of standing water. Drain the saucers about 10 minutes after watering.
- Most home environments, particularly in winter, do not provide adequate humidity. Mist the plants regularly or, even easier, put plants on humidity trays. Humidity trays can be bought or they can be made by putting gravel or decorative rocks in a water saucer to about 1/2 full. Set the plant on the rocks and add water to just the top of the rocks. The water evaporates and provides up to 30% more humidity.
- Generally, keep plants from drafty areas such as near doors or heating vents.
- If plants get dusty, give them an occasional washing. You can hold them over the bathtub and gently sprinkle the foliage or take them outside and do the same with the garden hose.
- Try to catch pest infestations early. Most insect problems on houseplants can be treated with horticultural oil which smothers them or with insecticidal soap. If you're unsure about which pest you have, bring a sample into the Greenhouse (in a ziploc bag!)

### **Plants for low light**

*Alocasia spp.*

Birdsnest Fern (*Asplenium nidus*)

Cast-Iron Plant (*Aspidistra elatior*)

Chinese Evergreen (*Aglaonema spp.*)

Corn Plant (*Dracaena deremensis*)

*Dracaena 'Janet Craig'*

Fiddleleaf Fig (*Ficus lyrata*)

*Philodendron spp.*

### **Plants for medium light**

*Anthurium*

Begonias

*Calathea spp.*

Cattleya orchid

Creeping Fig (*Ficus pumila*)

Ferns

Fiddle-leaf Fig (*Ficus lyrata*)

Grape Ivy (*Cissus antarctica*)

*Haworthia spp.*

Japanese Aralia (*Fatsia japonica*)

Ming Aralia

Kentia Palm (*Howea forsteriana*)

Lipstick Plant (*Arschynanthus lobbianus*)

Mistletoe Fig (*Ficus deltoidea*)

Mosaic Plant (*Fittonia verschaffeltii*)

Parlor Palm (*Chamaedorea elegans*)

Pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*)

Prayer Plant (*Maranta leuconeura*)

Rubber Plant (*Ficus elastica*)

Spider Plant (*Chorophytum comosum 'Vittatum'*)

Splitleaf Philodendron (*Monstera deliciosa*)

### **Plants for bright light**

Bromeliads

Buddha Belly (*Jatropha podagrica*)

Croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*)

European Fan Palm (*Chamaerops humilis*)

False Aralia (*Dizygotheca elegantissima*)

*Kalanchoe spp.*

Pineapple (*Ananas comosus*)

Polka Dot Plant (*Hypoestes phyllostachya*)

Swedish Ivy (*Plectranthus coleoides*)

Wandering Jew (*Zebrina pendula*)

### **Plants for Direct Sun**

Jade plant, Living Stone (*Lithops*), most Cacti, *Schefflera spp.*, Weeping Fig, Chinese hibiscus (*H. rosa-sinensis*)