

Growing Houseplants

This is Steve Rulison bringing you information on Shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. From my perch near the mouth of Occohannock Creek, I recorded _____ of rain last week.

Much of the scenic beauty of nature has been replaced by densely populated areas that sprawl for miles from urban cities. This visual pollution affects us all and leaves us with a longing for a closer connection with nature. Thankfully here on the Shore we have been able to preserve our open space but for those who do not have access to a large yard in which to garden or are not vested in their yard or garden upkeep, Houseplants are an ideal way to tend to plants while also enhance our sense of well-being.

Houseplants can be a satisfying hobby and can help purify the air in our homes. Indoor plants not only convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, but they also trap and absorb many pollutants coming from everyday items present in our homes and offices. To be a successful indoor gardener, you need to understand how the interior environment affects plant growth and how cultivation differs from growing plants outdoors.

Indoor plants growth is affected by light, temperature, humidity, water, nutrition, and soil. In this episode of our Master Gardener Minute we will talk about light and temperature specifications for houseplants.

Of all of the factors affecting plant growth in interiors, adequate light is by far the most important. Light is needed for plants to produce food and survive — generally, the more light available, the more food produced for growth. In your home, the amount of light in a given location is variable — it is affected by the presence of shade-producing trees outdoors, roof overhangs, wall color, window curtains, day length, time of day, and time

of year. When shopping for indoor plants, select plants for a given location based on the approximate light levels in that spot.

Temperature is the second most important factor influencing plant growth in interior environments. Temperature and light are linked through the processes of photosynthesis and respiration. These processes can be thought of as the “yin and yang” of plant life — two parts of a circle. Photosynthesis builds sugars and starch, which are then broken down by respiration to provide energy for the development of new tissues and the maintenance of existing ones. The best temperature range for indoor plants is 70-80 degrees Fahrenheit during the day and 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit at night. Be especially careful not to allow temperatures to drop below 50 degrees, or chill damage will result on some sensitive foliage plants. Chill damage is manifested by the yellowing of lower leaves and/or defoliation.

In the next weeks we will continue our discussion of growing houseplants.

For answers to Gardening questions and more, call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361.

<https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B1318&title=Growing%20Indoor%20Plants%20with%20Success>