

Bringing Indoor Plants Back into Your Home from their Outside “Vacation”

Did you give your indoor plants and yourself a rest over the past summer and put them outside? Hopefully, in a shaded area unless they were ‘sunlovers’! With the gorgeous covered patios, swimming pools, and pergolas that are in vogue right now, it is exciting to decorate with tropical plants, ferns, and other indoor/outdoor plants. While many of these may be too big to winter in your homes, sunrooms, and greenhouses (if you are so lucky), you might consider putting them into your garage. Having casters under large containers makes this job much easier. If you do use the garage, realize that many of these tropical plants will go semi-dormant during the winter months. Nearby windows or grow lights will help you achieve the goal of over-wintering them as well as a heater if temperatures dip into the teens. Reduce watering to once every two or three weeks and expect leaf drop.

Sunrooms and large windows are ideal settings for small houseplants. Some annuals will do well and bloom all winter in sunny locations. Just be sure to cut them back so they do not get too leggy.

Bring your plants indoors when outdoor temperatures start dipping below 45 degrees at night, especially any tropical plants.

Here are some things to remember before bringing them indoors:

- 1) If the plants are in a high light or sunny area, move them to a shadier location for at least one month before bringing them inside as mentioned above. This will greatly help the transitioning from outdoors to indoors and minimize shock.
- 2) Inspect the plants for pests. Gently rinse off the pests and clean the leaves.
- 3) Submerge the pot in water (like leaching) for a short period of time to flush any insects and potentially worms out of the pot.
- 4) If you are concerned about bringing any critters in, mix a dilute solution of an insecticidal soap and pour through the pot. Likewise, spray the leaves if you are worried about insects. Again, flush the pot after 15 minutes with fresh water. Always **read the label directions** and be sure that the insecticidal soap is not detrimental to that particular plant. Be sure to clean the pot on the outside.
- 5) Once they are brought back into the house, be aware of how much light they are receiving. Remember that the sun moves to the south in the winter, so avoid placing them in a south or west windowsill unless they are sun-lovers.
- 6) Reduce the amount of watering and do not fertilize during the winter months.

- 7) Be aware that houseplants that change locations, especially from bright light to lesser “candles,” will drop many of their leaves while adjusting to the new environment. Ferns are particularly susceptible about this.
- 8) Never put them near a heat vent. Plants do need some moist air, so a humidifier or bowls of water nearby will help to keep them healthy. Plants will do better in temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees rather than in overheated rooms.
- 9) Unless they are extremely overcrowded in the pot, it is best to wait until spring to repot them.
- 10) Finally, to know your plant’s needs, a good indoor garden book is a must!

In the spring, wait until the temperatures are above 50 degrees. Then, place them in a protected area out of any sun, repot, fertilize, water, and enjoy! They will really appreciate the “vacation” from the winter indoors. Do keep in mind that there are some houseplants that want to stay inside all year, so be sure to know your plants’ needs.