

House plants need special winter care

Winters can be hard on houseplants. Indoor temperatures are usually too high, humidity is too low and the light is inadequate for best possible growth.

"It takes a little care to bring houseplants through the winter months in good shape," says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent. "Where possible, conditions around

the plant should be adjusted to provide a healthy environment."

Houseplants respond best to temperatures from 60-74°F. Also, just as occurs in nature, plants need a definite change in temperature at night. A five to ten degree drop is usually enough to allow the plants to build new tissues from the food supply they manufactured during the day.

Houseplants in rooms that are too

hot tend to become spindly and less resistant to disease and insect attack, McNeilan says. They also produce poor quality flowers.

With the sun at a lower angle in the sky and the days getting shorter, a check of light levels on indoor plants is necessary. The best position for most plants, particularly flowering ones, is in a large window that is facing south.

Foliage plants usually need less

light than flowering types and will grow well in just about any window exposure. If possible, consider building a shelf in front of a south-facing window to accommodate your houseplants.

Window light may be supplemented with electric light, McNeilan notes. Fluorescent lighting provides the most light for the energy used and doesn't add much heat to the room.

The water needs of houseplants are low during the winter, McNeilan states. With most plants, you can let the potting soil dry slightly before watering again. Then be sure any excess water drains out the bottom of the pot. The soil should be moist after watering, not saturated.

If the pot sits in a dish or other type of receptacle, don't allow water that drains from the plant to remain in it.

Fertilizer needs are also reduced during the winter months for indoor plants. McNeilan suggests giving houseplants food once a month only if new growth is being made.

For plants that become spindly and weak-looking during the winter, McNeilan recommends pruning back long, straggly stems to within one-eight inch of a leaf joint. In addition, seed pods and wilted flowers and leaves should be removed.

Pasteurization essential

Consumers trying to save a few cents by purchasing raw milk instead of pasteurized milk, or by drinking raw cow's or goat's milk from their own cow or goat or neighbor's animal, could be taking a health risk, warns Nellie Oehler, home economist with the Oregon State University Extension Service.

Milk contains bacteria, most of which are beneficial, but Oehler warns that there may be bacteria present that can cause milkborne diseases.

Milk is an ideal medium for the growth of bacteria. Even when produced and handled under sanitary conditions, it could contain bacteria that cause flu-like illnesses, she said.

The *Campylobacter jejuni* bacteria cause an illness with symptoms of high fever, headache and diarrhea. These illnesses have been on an increase in areas where raw milk is readily available.

Milk is also an ideal place for the growth of the *Salmonella* bacteria, which is sometimes transmitted to the milk by the cow or contaminated during handling. Septic sore throat is also sometimes linked to raw milk.

The pasteurization process kills the disease-producing bacteria and makes the milk safe to drink, Oehler explains. Pasteurization destroys the harmful bacteria and reduces the number of other bacteria that cause milk to sour, thus increasing the storage life.

If raw milk is used, home pasteurization is highly recommended, says Oehler. The easiest way to pasteurize milk at home is to use a double boiler. Place the milk in a pan over boiling water and heat to 165°F, stirring while the milk is heating. As soon as the milk reaches 165°F, place the pan into cold water with ice and cool as rapidly as possible.

Rapid cooling helps to maintain the flavor of the milk. When sufficiently cooled, store the milk in the refrigerator.

Some natural food enthusiasts maintain that pasteurization destroys the vitamins in milk and much of the food value. Of the vitamins present in milk, only two are reduced, says Oehler. They are thiamin and Vitamin C. These vitamins are abundantly supplied in other foods such as bread and citrus fruits, she explained.

Most pasteurized and homogenized milk on the market is fortified with vitamin D. Raw milk is not fortified. If drinking raw milk, Oehler advises that you supplement your diet with vitamin D rich foods.

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- Wash interior walls and all removable parts with warm water and mild soap or detergent, or a solution of two tablespoons of baking soda to one quart of water.

- Put baking soda onto jelly roll pans and place on refrigerator shelves for several days.

- Spread activated charcoal onto jelly roll pans and place on shelves inside refrigerator.

- Place fresh ground coffee in cereal bowls inside refrigerator for several days. Slight coffee odor can remain but will soon disappear after washing.

- Pack each refrigerator shelf with crumpled newspaper. Sprinkle newspaper lightly with water. This method takes approximately 5-6 days, but helped eliminate strong odors.



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