

House Plants

. . . in the home



HOUSE PLANTS

By J. C. GARRETT
Assistant Extension Horticulturist

To grow plants in the house is neither difficult nor expensive. The interest, once started, continues to grow. To think a person must have a "green thumb" to grow plants is a mistake! There is nothing to take the place of correct care, devotion, and experience.

House plants are usually divided into two general groups: Foliage plants and Flowering plants. Many of the flowering plants have attractive leaves and stems, however.

Most of the foliage plants are quite easy to grow in the home. They readily adapt themselves to the hot, dry, dark conditions of the indoors.

Dependable Foliage Plants

Artillery Plant—Small leaves and flowers. Does well in winter sun, but needs shading during summer. Start plants from stem cuttings. To understand how the plant gets its name, place it in the sun a few minutes; then, sprinkle with water—the pollen bursts into small clouds of smoke along with a light, popping sound.

Ferns—*Asparagus*, *Plumosus*, *Sprengeri* are the most common of the ferns. They thrive on moist surroundings and require very little sunlight.

Begonia, Rex—Grown chiefly for its purplish foliage color with silvery markings. Give plenty of light during winter but shade during summer. Foliage should be kept dry except for occasional rinsing to remove dust.

Boston Fern—Long plume-like leaves with spores forming underneath. Prefers good light but not direct sunlight. Keep soil moist but not soggy—spray leaves with water now and then. Repot in fresh soil once a year and remove unsightly growth. Start from runners.

Rattlesnake Plant or Bowstring Hemp (Sansevieria)—Tall, sword-like leaves with green and silver mottled coloring. Keep soil on dry side. Will stand most any location. Start plants from leaf cuttings in sand.

Coleus—Bright leaf colors of green, red, and yellow. Best colors when grown in full sun. For shapely, thick plants, pinch the tops out when 5 or 6 sets of leaves have formed. Keep flower buds plucked off. Start from stem cuttings.

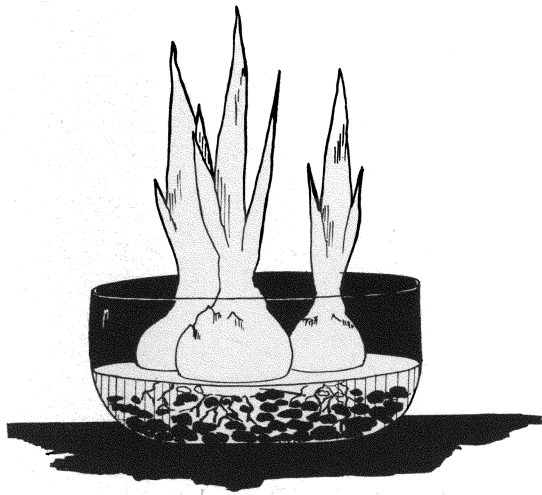
English Ivy (Hedera)—A vine which prefers to be out of the direct sun. Cuttings start easily in water; plants will grow in water.

Grape Ivy—Attractive cut-leaf vine; grows in water or soil; sun or shade, but prefers full sun with plenty of water.

Devil's Ivy or Philodendron—Easiest of all vines to grow. Dark green heart-shaped leaves. Will grow in most any condition. Starts easily in water or sand. Spray with water occasionally for moisture and leaf cleaning.

Bulb Plants in pots make attractive flowering house plants. Plant three or four bulbs to each container. Use a good soil mixture.





Bulbs of Paper-White Narcissi set in water on pebbles. Keep just enough water in the container to cover bottom one-third of the bulb. Select good firm bulbs for planting.

Jade Plant (Crassula)—Thick, leathery gray green leaves and foliage. Grows in light or sunny location. When plant is small, water is needed about every other day. As it becomes larger, water once or twice a week. Start from stem or leaf cuttings.

Sweet Potatoes—Grown in glass containers of water make nice foliage plants.

Desirable Flowering Plants

African Violet (Saintpaulia)—Bright, north window is preferred. Lukewarm water for watering. Repot about once a year. Keep free from mealy bugs and red spider. Use soil high in humus. Start from leaf-petiole cuttings or divide at the crown.

Amaryllis—Flowers, pink, red, or white before leaves are full-grown. Usually started in January. Plant bulb not more than two-thirds under the soil. Encourage summer growth for flowering next year.

Azaleas—Keep the soil acid by adding a teaspoonful of aluminum sulphate to soil every four weeks. Use light soil high in humus and sand. Spray foliage with water often. Keep in partial shade.

Begonia, Everblooming—Flowers white, pink, or red. Prefers cool, moist room, but will grow in most any light location.

Crown of Thorns—Closely related to the Poinsettia. Scarlet flowers continuously. Requires little care if kept in warm light location.

Geraniums—For more flowers, keep roots cramped and soil slightly dry. Bright sun and cool temperature preferred.

Sultana (Impatiens)—Pink, red, or white flowers. Easy to grow if given partial shade in summer and full sun in winter.

Petunia—Large, double-flowered preferred. Start new plants from cuttings. Grow in full sun and temperature less than 70°.

Shrimp Plant (Beloperone)—Pinkish-white floral effect. Blooms continuously. Requires little sun and likes to be sprayed often with water.

Wax Plant (Hoya)—A vine with attractive flowers and foliage. Flowers are white and pink; leaves thick and waxy. Grow in full sun. During November and December give a rest period in cool place; then, start watering in January for growth.

Orange, Grapefruit, and Lemon plants are easily grown from seeds placed in a can or pot.

Many annual flowers may also be grown in pots for winter blooming. Some of the dependable annuals are ageratum, alyssum, celosia (Princess Feather), larkspur, marigold, petunia, and many others. Plant the seed in boxes during August or early September. When the first pair of true leaves appear, transplant to small pots. The plants can be kept outside until just before freezing weather. Keep the plants short and stocky by giving plenty of growing space and light.

Cacti grow in full sun or shade. They prefer sandy soil and not too much water. Start from seeds or cuttings.

Bulbs such as tulips, narcissi, and hyacinths can be planted in cans or pots of soil. Plant the bulbs in September or October and store in cool basement, cellar, or dark unheated room and keep soil slightly moist. In January move the plants to a sunny window location for flowering. Leave the bulbs in the containers until the foliage yellows; then plant in the garden. Three or four bulbs to the container give the best effect.

Paper-White Narcissi can be planted in water on a pebble or sand base. Place just enough water in the container to cover the bottom of the bulb. Place in a darkened cool room for 2 or 3 weeks to form roots, then move to the light. Throw the bulbs away after flowering.

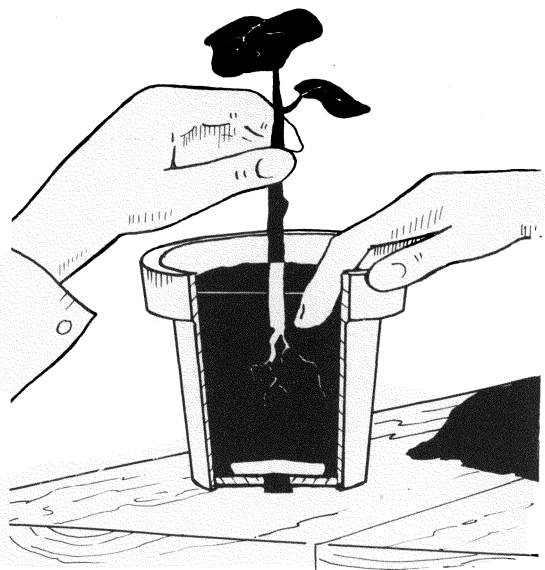
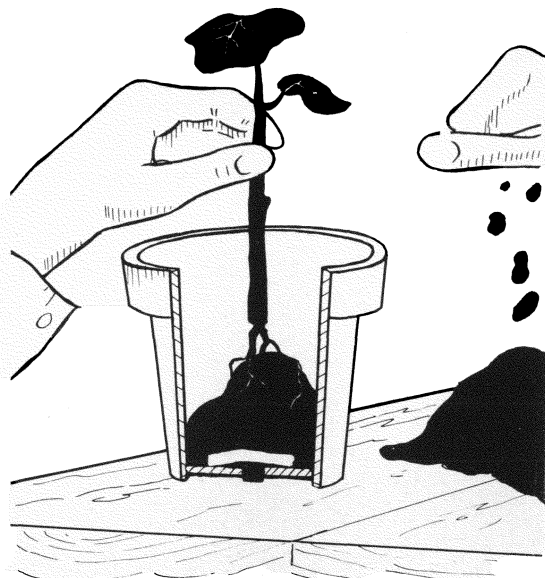
Containers for house plants may be clay pots, glazed pots, cans or other types. More water is lost by evaporation from clay pots. Any container should have a hole in the bottom for drainage. If colors are used, select soft colors of tan, browns, greens, and similar colors which will blend with plants; avoid too much decoration. Hanging baskets, window boxes, and others can be used, but good bottom drainage is needed.

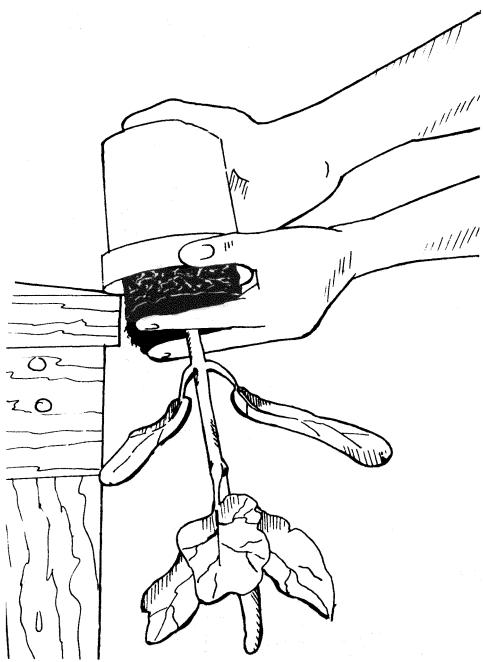
Soils—Ordinary garden soils are usually not good enough for house plants. A good general potting soil is:

- ½ good garden soil.
- ¼ well-rotted manure or compost or leaf mold.
- ¼ clean builder's sand.

Potting a plant correctly is important. Spread the roots over a firm mound of soil in the bottom of the pot. Be sure to cover the drainage hole with a piece of broken pot or small, flat pebbles.

Work soil carefully in around the tender roots. Firm the soil by pushing the thumb or finger downward along the edge of the pot. Rap the bottom of the pot firmly on the table to settle the soil. Leave watering space around the top of the pot.





Chemical Fertilizers—4-12-4 or 5-10-5 should be mixed in the potting soil at the rate of about a teaspoonful to a quart of soil. Gradual slowing of growth or fading of leaf color of potted plants may indicate the need for chemical

To remove a plant from a pot, place the stem of the plant between the first and second finger. Turn the pot upside down and gently tap the rim of the pot on the edge of a table. The plant with the ball of soil will drop out in the palm of the hand.

5a. A pot bound plant. Note the mass of roots covering the soil.

5b. The right stage for shifting to a large pot. Note the roots just partly covering the soil.

5c. This plant not ready for repotting. Only a few small roots showing on soil.

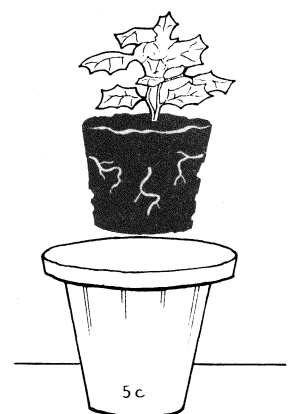
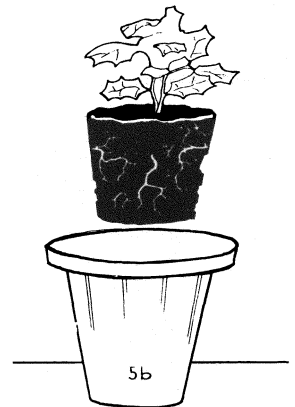
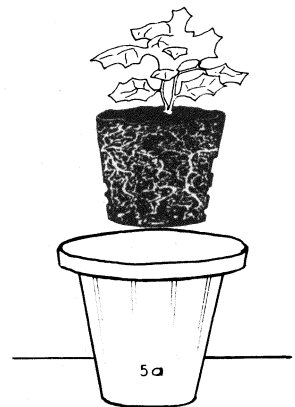
fertilizers. Sprinkle not more than half a teaspoonful of fertilizer on the soil surface and soak in with water. Too much fertilizing with chemicals is harmful.

Cacti prefer a mixture of half and half sand and soil, with less fertility than other plants.

Potting and Repotting—Use pots just large enough for the spread of the roots or repot to a slightly larger size. Before potting, wash the pot. Place drainage material, broken pieces of pot or gravel, over the bottom hole. Build a small mound of soil in bottom of the pot to spread the roots over. Work soil in around the roots. Firm the soil by pressing thumbs downward inside the pot and tapping the bottom of the pot gently on the table or bench. Leave watering space between soil line and rim of pot. Water the soil thoroughly.

Repotting—is needed when the roots become crowded for growing space or “pot bound.” Repot to a slightly larger container, keeping the ball of earth about the same height in the pot and adding new soil to the bottom of the pot and around the ball of soil and roots.

Watering—Experience is necessary for correct watering of house plants. If the pot has a clear ring when thumped with the thumb or a stick, it needs water, usually. Keep the soil fairly moist but not soggy wet. Plants in warm dry rooms need watering oftener than those in cool, moist rooms. If watered from the top, soak to the bottom of the pot—don’t sprinkle the soil surface. If watered from the

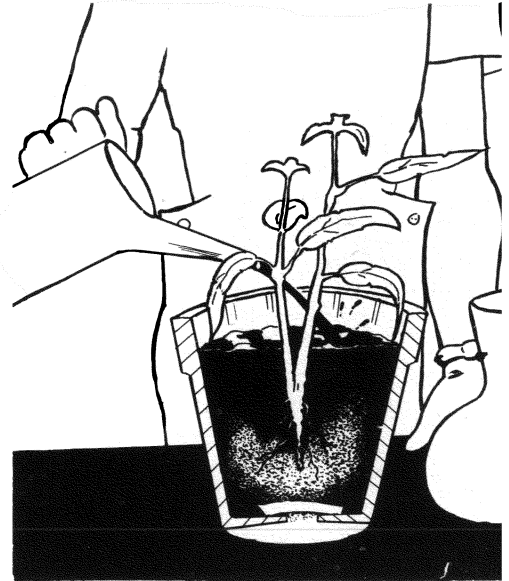


Watering of pot plants is very important. Water enough each time to moisten all the soil in the pot, but don't keep the soil soggy wet.

bottom, which is usually more desirable—soak until moisture shows on the soil surface.

Foliage plants need an occasional bath for appearance and to remove dust. Wash the smooth leaved plants with a soft cloth—hairy leaves may be sprayed or gently washed with a soft brush.

Starting New Plants is interesting. Most plants are started in the home by “cuttings.” Cuttings or slips are pieces taken from the stems or leaves and kept in moist sand, soil, or water until roots start forming.



Stem Cuttings are used for starting geraniums, coleus, wandering jew, ivy, poinsettia, and many others. Select partly ripened stems which snap readily when bent between the fingers. Leave four or five buds to each cutting. Make cuts with a sharp knife. Place the cuttings in a container of moist sand or water with one or two buds above the surface. Remove part of the leaves if they are large and tend to wilt.

Leaf Cuttings are made from such plants as Rex begonia and sedum. The leaves are cut at main veins and weighted down on moist sand. Roots start at the cuts.

Leaf-petiole Cuttings are used for Christmas begonia, gloxinia, African violet, etc. The petiole of the leaf is placed in moist sand up to the base of the leaf.

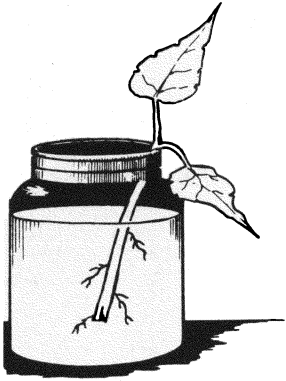
Leaf-bud Cuttings are used for English ivy, wax plant, philadendron, grape ivy, etc. A bud is cut from the stem with the leaf and petiole. The petiole and bud are placed in moist sand in a container. Cuttings usually start rooting in one to three weeks. Exposing the stems to air and drying temperatures by inspecting too often for roots will slow up the starting process. After roots are started, carefully reset the new plants in small pots or other containers.

Pinching or Pruning of most branching plants such as the coleus makes a better looking plant. An occasional pinching back of the growing tips will cause more branching and helps to prevent a tall, spindly plant. Large single stem plants or those which start new shoots at the base should not be pinched back.

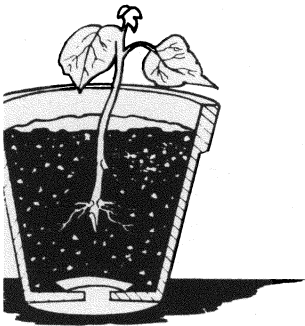
Do not use oil on the leaves of plants to make them look glossy.

Pests. Besides poor light, not enough moisture in the air and the problem of watering, there are several pests to deal with.

Aphids, or plant lice are common pests. They may be green, black, brown, or other colors. They are about the size of a pinhead and suck the



Cuttings from many plants can be started in water. Wandering Jew, Ivy, and many other plants can be started in water.



Cuttings from moist sand are easy to start from many plants such as coleus, geraniums, and others. Keep the sand moist or the cuttings will die.

sap from plants. Nicotine sulphate and soap in water should be used according to directions on the container.

Mealy-bugs look like a whitish mold. Roll a small wad of cotton on the end of a match or toothpick. Soak the cotton in alcohol and touch it to the back of each insect.

Scale Insects hide under a small brownish disc. Check the plants often to avoid attacks in large numbers. Oil emulsion sprays are effective. A home remedy is to apply the suds of strong yellow laundry soap with a toothbrush to infested areas. Wash the suds off the plant within three or four hours to prevent damage.

Types of cuttings



a. Stem cutting.



b. Leaf-bud cutting.



c. Leaf petiole cutting.
(The stem formation which holds a leaf to the plant stem is a petiole.)



d. Leaf cutting.

HOUSE PLANTS

A 4-H CLUB PROJECT

Purpose of the Project.

1. To encourage boys and girls to appreciate and enjoy growing plants indoors.
2. To encourage boys and girls to better understand the science of growing plants.

Project Requirements: Enroll in House Plants Project.

1st Year (9 to 11 years)

1. Start a scrapbook of clippings, pictures, and house plant ideas.
2. Keep a record and write a brief story including names of house plants learned; number and kinds of house plants started from cuttings and seeds; plants repotted; assistance given others on growing house plants.
3. (a) Grow an orange, lemon, or grapefruit plant from seed and care for it.
(b) Learn the common names and how to identify: 2 foliage plants and 2 flowering plants.

2nd Year (11 to 12 years)

1. and 2. same as for 1st year project.
3. (a) Grow a bulb plant in soil or water culture.
(b) Start a foliage plant in water and care for it.
(c) Learn the common names and how to identify 3 foliage house plants and 3 flowering house plants.

3rd Year (12 years and older)

1. and 2. same as 1st and 2nd year.
3. (a) Start a plant from a leaf or stem cutting.
(b) Prepare a potting soil mixture.
(c) Pot or repot two plants and care for them.
(d) Learn the common names and how to identify 5 foliage house plants and 5 flowering house plants.

Project Exhibit Suggestions for Fairs and Public Display.

1. Exhibit a scrapbook of house plant clippings and ideas.
2. Exhibit house plants.

Extension Service—Oklahoma A. and M. College

Shawnee Brown, Director

Stillwater, Oklahoma

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