

TOM'S GARDEN

BLOG DECEMBER 2022

Houseplants For the Holidays

You don't have to settle for the usual poinsettia display every year for home decoration. There are other flowering plants just as colorful and a lot less fussy. Cyclamen shows up this time of year in stores with different leaf patterns and flower colors. You will get blooms for 6 to 8 weeks and when it's done blooming, keep it around for a nice-looking, carefree houseplant.



It can live indoors year-round. Don't water it too much to avoid root rot and treat it more like a succulent. Cyclamen is toxic to humans and pets.

Potted azaleas are popular holiday houseplants, blooming about 4 weeks. Potted azaleas are evergreens that have been forced in a greenhouse to bloom in December. They are smaller and more suited as indoor plants than the hardy outside azalea bushes. Keep the plant out of direct sun and not too much watering!

Azaleas Are toxic to cats and dogs.



African Violet. Here's one that is safe for pets. Usually given as a Valentine's Day gift, it is also a good Christmas centerpiece. African violets (*Saintpaulia* spp) flower constantly with white, purple, pink, or blue flowers. There are also trailing and dwarf varieties. African violets don't like cold water or getting their leaves wet. Keep the soil moist but don't let them drown or dry up.

Kalanchoe (ka-luhn-kow-ee)

Sometimes this plant is named "Christmas Kalanchoe" and makes a great houseplant that will bloom for 8 weeks. It is a succulent and does well in bright light with minimal watering. Give it complete saturation once a month. Kalanchoe is toxic to cats and dogs.

Rosemary (*Salvia Rosmarinus*)

This time of year, rosemary plants are pruned as a Christmas tree and offered at nurseries. You can use a few sprigs in winter stews and decorate it as a miniature Christmas tree for a table decoration. Rosemary has a strong, pleasant scent indoors and likes full sun without too much watering. Reindeer don't like it, so keep it off the roof for Santa's arrival!



Cold Hardy Succulents do well year-round outdoors. They can take freezing winter temperatures. All they ask is to have well-drained soil that doesn't remain wet all winter. Succulents such as sempervivum (hens and chicks), will do well all winter and start growing again come spring. Others, such as sedum, will go dormant and die off to ground level and begin new growth in spring. These succulents grow better outside, rather than being brought inside for the winter. Soft varieties of succulents must come in before temperatures get below freezing.

You can return them outside when the weather warms. It's a good idea to grow these in pots or containers that make it convenient to move around.

Indoor areas get less sunlight in winter. Be sure to move your plants around and place near a sunny window. Turn them occasionally to keep even growth. If you don't have enough sunny windows, succulents do well under lights indoors. The new LED lights are economical and put out good light for all plants.



Winter tended plants indoors. Airflow and watering techniques are important to indoor succulents. Plants need much less watering when grown indoors. Use a light, gritty mix of cactus and succulent soil and don't fertilize till spring. Be sure the pot has a drainage hole (very important.) Putting rocks in the bottom of a pot will not increase drainage (myth.) Water the container until water flows out of the drainage hole. Let the soil dry out completely before watering again.

This sometimes can take several weeks or even a month. The worst thing you can do is water every few days keeping the soil moist. This will cause root rot and eventual death of the plant. I label groups of plants with sticky notes to keep track of watering dates.

Bathroom Plants That Love Humidity

There are some plants that would really love to be kept in your bathroom.



Live plants will absorb moisture, enhance the decor, and improve your mood.

Bathrooms are probably the most humid room in the house, but they typically have low light levels.

There are many indoor tropical plants that love these conditions. Here are a few:

*Peace lily (*Spathiphyllum wallisii*)

It absorbs moisture through its leaves and can survive with very little watering.

*Snake plant or Mother-in-law's tongue. (*Sansevieria trifasciata*)

This is a very popular, no-care houseplant. It will take high humidity and low light. Water every few weeks.

*Spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*)

Spider plant is a spectacular plant that will improve your bathrooms' appearance. It is one of the best plants for cleaning the air.

*Boston Fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata*)

Boston ferns like moist air and indirect light.

*ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*)

Also called "eternity plant" because it is indestructible and will tolerate low light, high humidity, low water, and temperature swings. You can put this one in your bathroom and forget about it!

*Pothos (*Epipremnum aureum*)

"Devil's ivy" or "cubicle plant" It can survive any conditions. A fast-growing vine that will take low light and irregular watering.

*Orchids (*Phalaenopsis* spp)

Orchids will add some nice color and bloom for a long time. They like the warm temperature and humidity of a bathroom.

*Bromeliads

Some bromeliads are epiphytic, meaning they don't need soil. This type gets moisture from the air and only need some type of media to hold them up. An orchid mixture or coarse perlite works well. They are understory plants in the wild and need very little light.



*Airplants

Obviously, airplants love bathrooms!

