

Flora & Fauna

7 Indoor Gardening Tips

As the frost of winter approaches, it can be a bit sad to say goodbye to your plants until the next season. Luckily, you can keep the winter weather blues by bringing your garden indoors! Whether you're a seasoned gardener or struggle with your green thumb, here are some tips to help your indoor garden thrive:

1. **Lighting.**

Plants need sunlight to thrive, but with the long nights and short days of winter, you'll need to supplement sunlight with artificial light. Research shows that two hours of fluorescent light is roughly equal to an hour of sunlight for plants, and it's an easy and convenient substitute for natural light. Make sure to get lights that are labeled “full-spectrum” or “cool white” to ensure your plants get both the red and blue wavelengths they need for growth.

2. **Space.**

Just as they do outside, indoor plants need enough room to grow. Make sure to plant them in pots that are large enough to allow the plant to develop deep roots and large foliage.

3. **Water.**

Now that your plants cannot depend on rainfall, you need to make sure they're getting the right amount of water, which includes picking the right soil, pots, and making sure you have allowed for proper drainage. Some plants need a period of dry soil for a few days, while others need consistently moist soil.

4. **Skip the Fertilizer.**

The summer months are peak growing season for plants, and fertilization provides the food plants need for producing leaves and fruit. During winter, however, most plants enter a resting period, so fertilization isn't necessary.

5. **Humidity.**

Household furnaces keep our homes warm, but can leave the air feeling dry. Just as dry air can irritate our skin, it can also have a negative effect on your houseplants. You can create pockets of humidity for your plants by placing one or more pots in a tray of wet pebbles.

6. **Temperature.**

It's important to keep the temperature comfortable and steady for optimal plant growth. Most indoor plants will thrive at a temperature of 65°–75°F.

7. **Pest Control.**

Indoor plants are not immune to pests. Aphids and water mites are just two pests that often prey on indoor plants, so make sure to eliminate the problem quickly. Small infestations on your plants can be dealt with by using a cotton swab and rubbing alcohol.

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Cleaning Corner:

How to Clean Stinky Appliances

1. Your Sink/Garbage Disposal

Pour 1 cup of baking soda down the drain followed by 1 cup of white vinegar. Let it sit for 10 minutes, and then flush it out by pouring a pot full of boiling water down the drain.

2. Your Dishwasher

Empty the dishwasher and then place 1 cup of white vinegar in a dishwasher-safe container on the upper rack of the machine. Run a hot water cycle. Take a clean, damp towel and wipe the door, seals, and clean the trap/drain at the bottom to remove any leftover bits of food or residue.

3. Your Washing Machine

Mix a 1/4 cup of baking soda with a 1/4 cup of water. Add this solution to the detergent container. Pour 2 cups of white vinegar into the drum and run a normal load at high heat. Scrub any remaining dirty spots with the rough side of a sponge dipped in a solution of one part vinegar, one part water.

November

- 1775 The U.S. Marine Corps is established as part of the U.S. Navy. It will become a separate unit on July 11, 1789
- 1848 The Boston Female Medical School is founded by Samuel Gregory. It has just 12 students and is the first medical school for women
- 1922 King Tut's tomb is discovered at Luxor, Egypt, by British archaeologist Howard Carter
- 1947 The first and only flight of Howard Hughes' "Spruce Goose" flying boat occurs in Long Beach Harbor, California. The plane travels about a mile at an altitude of 70 feet
- 1957 Soviet Russia launches the world's first inhabited space capsule, Sputnik II, which carries a dog named Laika
- 1992 The Church of England votes to allow women to become priests

Healthy Living: Decoding Your Cravings

Do you find yourself craving sweets or salty foods at certain times during the day? Have you ever wondered why you can't seem to get that chocolate off your mind? Those crazy cravings could be your body trying to tell you something.

Here's what those cravings mean (and some healthier options to satisfy your body and your mind!):

- **Chocolate.** Who doesn't crave chocolate every now and then? While the occasional sweet tooth is normal, regular hankerings for chocolate may indicate a decrease in magnesium levels. Magnesium aids in muscle regulation and nerve functions, as well as balancing blood sugar and blood pressure. Instead of reaching for the chocolate bar or brownies, try snacking on some nuts, seeds, avocado, or banana.
- **Carbs.** Unless you're an athlete looking to load up on carbohydrates before a big game, major carb cravings mean your body is looking for some nitrogen. Your body needs nitrogen to keep the proteins in your hair, muscles, skin, and other important tissues healthy. Foods that are high in nitrogen include meat, fish, nuts, and beans/legumes.
- **Fatty Foods.** Have a hankering for oily, buttery foods that come from the fryer? You're probably lacking a sufficient amount of calcium. This is an important mineral that helps build bone density, aids in muscle contraction, and helps your nerves send out messages to the rest of your body. For a healthy alternative to get the calcium you need, try eating yogurt, cheese, broccoli, and other leafy green vegetables.
- **Caffeine.** When we seriously crave that third cup of coffee or an extra glass of soda, our bodies are craving phosphorus, sulfur, and iron. Phosphorus works with calcium to keep your bones and teeth strong, while sulfur and iron help your cell structure and blood cells, respectively. All three of these nutrients can be found in seeds, nuts, cheese, broccoli, or eggs.
- **Salt.** Any kind of salty craving is most likely a cry for more chloride in your body. This is an important electrolyte found in your blood that keeps the fluid in and around your cells in balance. To stock up on chloride, eat more fish or flavor your food with unrefined sea salt, as this is a healthier alternative to refined table salt.

Kid Corner: 6 Fun Outdoor Fall Activities

Sometimes cooler weather and the promise of frost causes us to shut ourselves away in our homes, glued to the TV as we wait for spring to return again. But just because the air is cooler doesn't mean the fun stops! Take a look at some of these fun activities you and your children can do together to make sure this fall is packed with adventures!

1. **Go Apple Picking.** This oldie but goodie is a must during the fall months. Find a local apple orchard near you and plan a day for picking apples, drinking apple cider, and maybe even treating the kids to some caramel apples!
Tip: apple orchards on sunny fall days make the perfect backdrop for some family photos. Snap some cute pictures of your little ones trying to reach the highest apple they can or bite into a sweet and healthy treat!
2. **Rake the Leaves.** One of the cheapest ways to enjoy fall is right outside your front door! Find some small rakes for your little tykes so they can help gather those fallen leaves into a nice, big pile. Once all your leaves are gathered, you can jump in the pile, or even start collecting different leaves for an identification book. It's the perfect way to spend time outdoors while also learning more about nature.
3. **Wander around a Corn Maze.** A great outdoor activity is getting lost in a corn maze. You can usually find one at a local pumpkin patch, apple orchard, or farm! Kids will get some physical activity as they run up and down the aisles of the maze, and as an added bonus, they'll exercise their minds by testing their memory to see which direction to turn next. Turn it into a race to see who can solve the maze first!
4. **Attend a Fall Festival.** Festivals are great this time of year because there's usually a ton of activities set up all around the grounds. Pumpkin carving, hay rides, stands to buy sweets, like candy apples and kettle corn, perhaps even a few carnival rides and activities. Visit www.fairsandfestivals.net to find local events near you.
5. **Have a Backyard Campfire.** Another fun thing to do outside this time of year is sit by a backyard bonfire! Grab some marshmallows, your favorite chocolate bar, and some graham crackers to make a delectable s'more. Or, if you're starting the bonfire early, put some hot dogs on skewers and let your kids cook their own dinner! Just make sure to buy skewers that are pretty long so hands don't get too close to the fire.
6. **Go to a Drive-In.** Many drive-ins will remain open into the fall months for the best outdoor viewing experience. It's not too hot, bugs are minimal, and you can snuggle up under the stars. Grab your kid's favorite pillows and blankets, bring some snacks (or grab some popcorn at the concessions stand) and enjoy a back-to-back feature while sitting outside. If there's no local drive-in near you, make your own! Hang a bedsheet between some trees, use a projector, and invite the kids in the neighborhood to a free movie at your place.

Ingredients:

- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp chili powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp cumin
- 2 Tbs olive oil
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 1 can diced green chilies
- 12 oz enchilada sauce
- 1 1/2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 15-oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup corn kernels
- 1/2 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded Monterrey jack cheese
- 1 Tbs fresh cilantro, chopped

Directions:

1. Preheat the broiler.
2. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion, sauté 2–3 min.
3. Add the smoked paprika, chili powder, salt, and cumin, toss to coat. Then stir in the red pepper and green chilies, cook 2 min more.
4. Add the rice, beans, corn, and enchilada sauce. Stir to mix thoroughly and allow to cook for 5–7 minutes until heated throughout.
5. Transfer to a small casserole dish. (Skip if using an oven-safe skillet.)
6. Spread the cheddar and Monterrey jack cheese over the top. Place in the broiler for 3–4 minutes until the cheese is golden and bubbly.
7. Garnish with fresh cilantro and serve hot.

Tip: Serve with warm corn tortillas, sour cream, diced green onions, and sliced avocado for a thoroughly filling meal!

Four Ways to Give Thanks this Holiday Season

Whether it's the nice weather, a family member's health, or delicious food, it's important to give thanks and promote positivity, especially in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. As the holiday season approaches, take a look at some of these ways to give thanks:

1. **Round Robin.** Try this fun and easy exercise at the table, either at Thanksgiving dinner, or any sit-down dinner with the family. Start by going around the table and finding just one thing, no matter how small, that everyone is thankful for that day. As you go around the table, see if you can expand your gratitude to the week, month, year, and even a major aspect of your life. You'll be surprised at how good it feels to acknowledge all the things you have with gratitude.
2. **Donate.** One way to extend your gratitude from the dinner table out into the world is to donate to those less fortunate. And there are so many ways to do this! Find a local food pantry or church accepting food donations and donate a full Thanksgiving dinner. Or, donate some old (but still in good condition) clothes, shoes, and jackets to Goodwill. By sharing what you have with others, you can promote positivity and gratitude on a much grander scale.
3. **Volunteer.** Give thanks by volunteering this holiday season. There are many places where the whole family can volunteer and lend a helping hand, such as a local animal shelter, nursing home, hospital, or food pantry. Not only will you be helping those who need it, but you might even make new friends or find more to be thankful for along the way.
4. **Include Everyone.** For friends or family that can't be with you this holiday season, make hand-crafted cards to tell them how thankful you are for them and how much you miss them. This can be a simple note, or it can be made into a craft for the whole family. Kids can use construction paper to make hand-traced turkeys, or heart-filled cards with personalized notes and drawings. It's a fun and thoughtful way to remember the people in your life that matter the most.

The Holidays Are Coming *Time to Call in the Pros!*

With the holidays approaching, the number one question people ask is: should I get my carpet cleaned *before* or *after* company comes?

Call us BEFORE your big party if you have heavily soiled traffic lanes, lots of spots/spills, and musty/stale odors in your carpet. We can rejuvenate your carpet and leave the whole house looking cleaner and smelling great before company comes.

Call us AFTER your big party if your carpet is in reasonably good condition now, but you just know that after guests wander around and track in dirt on their shoes, it'll look a little worse for wear. We'll remove all that tracked in dirt and treat any spots from spilled food or drinks.

Whether you have us come in before or after company comes, here's what you can do before we arrive to get your home ready for cleaning:

1. Clear away small objects, such as toys, books, lamps, trashcans, etc. Move these items to another room or place them on a counter so they won't get damaged or knocked over.
2. Make a note of areas that need special attention. We'll do our best to address all areas of concern.
3. Move any pets into a room not being cleaned (such as the bathroom or basement). Our equipment can be noisy, so nervous animals may be happier staying with someone else during our visit.