

Reintroducing Your Houseplants to the Indoors

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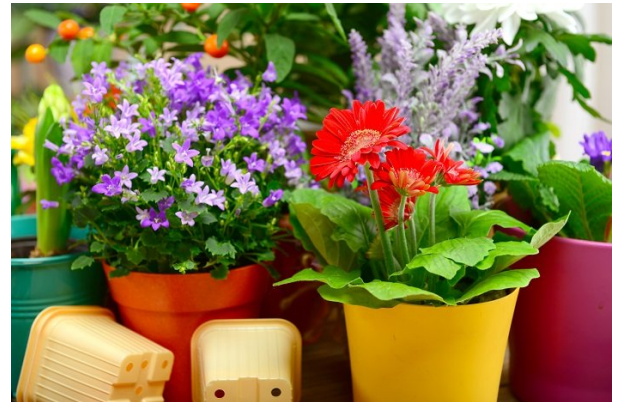


It's important to acclimate your houseplants to the indoors after a long summer outside.

Labor Day signals more than the unofficial end of summer — it's also the time to begin the process of bringing houseplants and other weather-sensitive plants indoors. After a few months of soaking up the heat and sun, tropical plants must be brought in before temperatures fall. Of course, there's more to this process than just hauling these plants inside, as they are often easily shocked by sudden changes in temperature, humidity, light, and other conditions. Take a few weeks to acclimate them to their new environment, and you'll be rewarded with happy and healthy houseplants.

Choose Which Plants to Move

Before you move any plants, you'll want to assess which ones should make the transition. Start with your favorite ones, or the plants you tend to shower extra attention on during the year. Then, turn your attention to [succulents](#) and the other houseplants you've set outside for the summer. If you're growing any warm season vegetables like [peppers](#), bring them indoors, too, so you can continue to enjoy the harvest well into the cooler months.



Only bring the healthiest plants inside. Chances are, if a plant struggled to thrive outdoors, it'll continue to struggle in its new environment. While you may be able to nurse it back to health, it may be better to just let it go now so you can make room for a healthier plant.



Check for Pests

Prevent bugs from setting up shop in your home and infecting your other indoor plants by thoroughly inspecting your plants for pests such as [spider mites](#), whiteflies, mealybugs, and aphids. Be sure to [carefully remove any that you encounter](#). It may sound tedious, but a bit of work upfront will keep you from having to deal with a wild infestation in all of your houseplants later in the winter.

After you've searched for and removed pests, hose the leaves down to ensure you're getting rid of anything that may have hidden in your plants' nooks and crannies. Then, you'll want to

treat your plant with [neem oil](#), which you can purchase online or at your local garden shop. Neem oil is a non-toxic pesticide and fungicide that works great on all of your houseplants and in the garden.

Prune and Change the Soil

If your plants experienced a growth spurt over the summer, now is a good time to [prune](#) and shape them to encourage healthy growth in the future. Remember, it's only necessary to prune about one-third of most plants — any more may damage them. Be sure to remove any dead or yellowing leaves. If you're pruning the leaves, it may also be necessary to prune an equal share of the roots as well.

[Repotting your plants](#) and changing the soil in their containers will help you get rid of any bugs that may have made a home there. Plus, many soils intended for houseplants contain fertilizers that can only provide nourishment for a short period of time, making it necessary to change them out every year or so in order to reap their benefits.

When removing the plants from their pots, be careful not to damage their roots, especially if you find they've become root-bound. Once you've removed the plant and soil, clean the interior of each pot with a solution of 10 percent bleach. If the plant is root-bound, carefully tease the roots out of the holes in the pot. If you've already pruned the top of the plant, you may be able to simply cut the roots free of the pot, so long as the amount you cut in each area is about equal.

Although you're removing the plant from the pot and replacing the soil, you should only increase the size of the pot if the plant is root-bound. Otherwise, you can replant it in the same-sized container and wait to upgrade it until the spring.

Find the Perfect Spot

Find a spot in your home that is draft-free and gets plenty of sunshine (preferably a south-facing place, especially if you have sun-loving plants). You'll want to ensure that the plants can enjoy the maximum amount of sunlight each and every day. Keep your windows clean so that your plants can soak up as much light as possible during the winter months.



If you don't have a sunny spot to place your plants, purchase indoor plant lights to compensate. Group plants with similar light and watering requirements together to make them easier to care for.

If you have pets, place your plants in an inaccessible area, such as on a shelf. Some varieties are even poisonous to pets, so if you have a curious dog or cat, make sure to review [this list from the ASPCA](#), and take extra precautions if any of your plants are on this list.



Get Your Plants Acclimated

Begin bringing your plants indoors when the temperatures get closer to about 65 degrees Fahrenheit at night. While you could wait until the first frost, starting the process early will guarantee your plants' safety in the event of a surprise cold spell. There's a marked difference in light, humidity, and temperature between the in and outdoors, so start by bringing the plants in only at night for at least three or four days. As you bring them back outside in the morning, look for signs of stress like wilt or leaf loss.

After about four days, begin to extend the amount of time the plants stay indoors. For example, on day four, bring in the plants an hour earlier in the evening and put them out an hour later in the morning. Soon, they'll be inside all the time. Continue to look for signs of stress.

Remember, your plants may not need as much water during the cooler months, so only water them when the soil in their containers is dry. Watering stakes, which you can pick up at your local garden shop or make yourself using a soda or wine bottle with a tapered neck, cut down on your labor by watering the plant for you when it needs it the most.

With a bit of time, care, and attention, your houseplants will successfully make the transition from outdoors to indoors and continue to thrive throughout the fall.