Segment for Week of 24 May, 2021 **757-550-1854**

Growing Houseplants – part 2

This is Steve Rulison bringing you information on Shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. From my perch near the mouth of Occohannock Creek, I recorded _____ of rain last week.

This week's Master Gardener Minute is a continuation of our Growing Houseplants Series.

Houseplants can be a satisfying hobby and can help purify the air in our homes. Indoor plants not only convert carbon dioxide to oxygen, but they also trap and absorb many pollutants coming from everyday items present in our homes and offices. To be a successful indoor gardener, you need to understand how the interior environment affects plant growth and how cultivation differs from growing plants outdoors.

Indoor plants growth is affected by light, temperature, humidity, water, nutrition, and soil. Today we will talk about humidity and water specifications for houseplants.

Relative humidity is the amount of moisture contained in the air. For interior plants, relative humidity below 20 percent is considered low, 40 percent – 50 percent is medium, and above 50 percent is high. Relative humidity is a very important factor, but it is easily overlooked. In a greenhouse, relative humidity is 50 percent or higher. Most indoor plants come from the tropics where high relative humidity is common. Therefore, take the following steps to help your plants adjust to the low relative humidity in your home.

- Place plants close together to create a microenvironment
- Use a shallow container filled with water and lava rocks or gravel
- Use a humidifier.
- Use mist bottles to spray water around the plant

Learning to water is one of the most important skills in plant care. Applying too much water can suffocate plant roots and too little water causes growth to become erratic and stunted. Watering frequency will depend on the conditions under which the plants are growing.

Improper watering causes many problems. Containers with saucers may cause an excessive build-up of soluble salts and high levels of soluble salts can cause damage to plant roots and a decline in growth. Discard any water that had drained in the saucer after irrigation, and apply large quantities of water to the soil to leach the accumulated soluble salts. In deciding when you should water, feel the soil by pushing a finger an inch or so below the surface. If the soil is still moist, no further water is needed. Water devices or water meters are also available to simplify watering.

We will continue our discussion about houseplants in the coming weeks.

The Master Gardeners are hosting a Cape Charles Garden Tour on Sunday, June 6, 2021, from 12:00 pm - 5:00 pm. The Tour begins at New Roots Youth Garden, on the corner of Randolph Ave and Fig Street, where children, families and the community experience a connection with food from seed to table. Gardeners will be available to answer your questions about their plant choices, horticultural practices and how they deal with gardening challenges. Come out and enjoy a day in the garden!

For answers to Gardening questions and more, call your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361.

https://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B1318&title=Growing%20Indoor%20Plants%20with%20Success