

# Houseplant

## Supplies

When you bring a plant home, there are a few things you need to get started. You may be surprised by how much you already have on hand!

**Spray bottles** are something that will make your life easier. You can keep plants clean, up the humidity and use your homemade sprays. These are pretty cheap and a must have for plant care. I prefer glass in general, but plastic is the cheapest option.

**Hydrogen peroxide** is a workhorse - it's great for pest prevention and plants love it.

**Essential Oils** like peppermint, cinnamon or clove can be used for pest prevention.

**Castile soap** is another item you might already have on hand and is great for cleaning your plants and keeping them free of pests. I like the peppermint Castile soap for the smell.

**Neem oil** is great to have on hand to make your own cheap and effective pest & plant cleaning spray.

**Isopropyl alcohol** is another handy pest-fighting tool. You can use this for direct applications to infestations on your leaves and stems.

**Systemic granules** are a cheap and effective preventative pest control option. They are scentless and help keep pests from taking up residence in your soil.

**Fertilizer** is an important thing to have for your plants, especially when they are in peak growing season in spring and summer. I find liquid to be most convenient. Fertilizer will have a ratio with three numbers such as 4-5-5. The best all-purpose fertilizers will have numbers that are close together. You can find type-specific fertilizers, but I prefer all-purpose products.

**Potting soil** is something you will need as your plant grows. You can buy plant-specific soil mixes, or keep an all-purpose mix which will be sufficient for the majority of plants. Add some perlite for extra drainage and oxygen and you're all set

**Chopsticks** are an easy way to check your soil moisture. Be sure to get uncoated, plain chopsticks for this purpose.



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When you bring a plant home, there are a few things you need to get started. Here's a few things that are nice to have.

**Clear pots** are a great thing to have on hand to transfer your new plants.

**Lighting** is an important consideration. If you, like me, do not have optimal lighting in your home, you can supplement with grow lights. I use a clip light, a Sansi bulb in my ceiling for some of my hanging plants, bar lights inside my greenhouse and a desk lamp with a grow bulb.

**Timers** are a great accessory if you go the grow light route. I love having my lights on timers because if I didn't, none of my plants would get enough light. I use a low-tech timer for some of my lamps as well.

**This tool set** is a cost effective collection of a few things to make life easier. These are especially nice to have for propagation and repotting.

**Humidity** is an important consideration for a lot of houseplants. If you have a small space for your plants, misting or using a small humidifier can help up the humidity around your plant.

**Temperature** is important for the health of your plants. If you have concerns on the environmental temperature of your plants, a thermometer-hygrometer combo is something you need. I have several and love being able to monitor the humidity as well.





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## *Care Tips*

You'll need to do a few things to keep your plant growing and in the best condition.

**Acclimating your new plant** - When you bring home a new plant, be sure to keep it away from your other plants, at least until you can confirm it is pest-free. Clean your new plant thoroughly and let it get used to being in your home before repotting it.

**Checking your soil** - Before watering or fertilizing, be sure to check your soil moisture. You can use a chopstick in your soil as if you're checking a cupcake for doneness with a toothpick. If the chopstick comes out dirty, it's best to wait on watering. If it comes out clean, it's ready to be watered.

**Watering** - Water thoroughly until water comes through the drainage holes. Watering on a schedule doesn't work for most plants, so check your soil as noted above. It's worth mentioning that some plants hate tap water. In those cases, you can collect rain water, use bottled water or use aquarium water conditioner.

**Fertilizing** - You can stick to a monthly schedule for most plants, or use a diluted amount with every watering. I've done both, and it really just depends on what works for your schedule and memory! If you're using a schedule, add fertilizer to your regular watering.

**Repotting** - Size up only one or two inches at a time, as you can shock your plant if the new pot is too large. Unpot your plant and check your roots, removing as much old soil as you can. Add a small amount of fresh soil to your new pot, then add your plant. Add soil over your roots until your plant is secure. I prefer to repot before the plant is due for a watering so I can water after repotting. If your new plant is in rough shape when you bring it home, you might repot it right away.

**Cleaning** - Use 1 quart of water, 1 tsp Neem oil, and 1/2 tsp of Castile soap. Spray your plants and let sit for 15 minutes, then wipe down both sides of your leaves. You can add 1 T of Isopropyl Alcohol for added pest protection and cleaning power.



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## Care Tips & Common Conditions

As you care for your plant, you'll need check it regularly to keep it growing in the best conditions.

**Pests** - Use a 50/50 ratio of water/peroxide to help prevent fungus gnats. To help knock out and prevent fungus gnats, use a 4:1 or 3:1 ratio of water and peroxide sprayed on your plant leaves and stems. For other non-flying critters, you can wash your plant using the spray above, or apply Isopropyl Alcohol with a cotton swab directly. Essential oils can be added to your water - just a few drops per gallon. This is a good way to prevent pests if you buy water in gallons, or if you collect & store rain water.

**Root Problems** - If you notice anything going on with your leaves, check your roots. If your current soil is struggling with drainage and your roots start to dissolve, you are dealing with *root rot*. Repotting in dry soil is your best bet for rehabbing. I have saved many plants this way - just unpot, spray your roots with a 4:1 water and peroxide mix, and transfer to dry soil in a new pot and wait a few days before watering.

If your plant is *root bound*, it may start looking inexplicably sad. Check your roots - if there are more roots than soil, it's time to repot so your plant can get the nutrients it needs.

**Leaf problems** - If you're getting crispy edges from a plant, you could be dealing with a plant that is sensitive to minerals in your water. Switch to filtered water. Variegated leaves are especially sensitive and can brown easily.

If your leaves are wilting, check your roots and soil dampness. In the case of variegated plants, wilting can also be caused by a lack of light, as they tend to need more light than their non-variegated counterparts.

Repot if you have run into root rot, or if your plant is root bound.

Yellowing leaves are most commonly a sign of overwatering. Check your roots, as it can also be an early sign of it being root bound. Some plants like being dry all the way to the bottom of the pot, while others only like to dry out on the top couple inches. Reduce the frequency of your watering, and repot if your soil is staying too wet.

