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Helping Your Houseplants

As we look forward to this year's garden, let's not forget about the plants on our window sills. Houseplants are often neglected, but can also be over-loved, so giving them the right amount of care is important.

The best way to check on the plants is to assess their needs. Sunlight and water are the two biggest needs. As days get brighter, the sunlight supply is slowly increasing. For now, southern windows are still the best place for light-dependent plants. In terms of water, it's generally best to let the soil get a little bit dry. The general recommendation is to let the top 2 inches, or 2 knuckles deep, dry before watering. Overwatering is a big killer of houseplants. Some plants actually thrive on a little neglect.

Some common needs for houseplants are as follows: consistent moisture for peace lilies and pothos, bright, indirect light for most succulents, and occasional neglect for ZZ plants. Trust me, they prefer it. Many houseplants can survive in less-than-ideal conditions but will show signs of decline. An overwatered succulent may have no roots, or it might be leggy from too little light. If the plant isn't looking great, consider a better location or better care.

As spring and summer approach, you might consider bringing some plants outdoors, particularly poinsettias. A word of warning: throwing something into the summer heat from a house is not ideal. Just as spring transplants need hardening off, summer porch plants need to be gradually acclimated to heat and sunlight. Houseplants can receive a little fertilizer as a pick me up in the summer. Full strength, following the box or bag instructions, should be fine unless the plant has a poor root system or is undergoing significant location changes.

Plants aren't people, and our accommodations might not suit them very well. As we get ready for spring gardening, let's not forget about the plants nearest to us.

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