Houseplant Checklist

Created: 12/28/2011

# Tasks:

☐ **Selection**

☐ **Assess your light**

*Know if the location for your plant receives bright, partial or low light.*

☐ **Read the tag**

*Plants usually have a care tag that will give information on required light, water and growth patterns.*

☐ **Look at the leaves**

*Before buying, look the plant over carefully. Examine the leaves for holes, insects, yellow or brown leaves, wilted or dead leaves. Pass up plants that look unhealthy.*

☐ **Check the drainage holes**

*If the roots of the plant are growing out the drainage holes, the plant is root-bound and needs to be re-potted in a larger container. If the mass of roots is very large, the plant might be in poor health and not survive transplanting.*

☐ **Smell the soil**

*Potting soil should have an earthy smell, not sour or unpleasant. There should not be insects, fungus or white crusts on the soil.*

☐ **Regular care**

☐ **Water when slightly dry**

*Check your plants daily by feeling the surface of the soil. Don’t wait until all the soil is dry and the plant wilts.*

☐ **Water sufficiently**

*When watering, slowly pour in water until it runs out the drainage holes of the pot. This thoroughly soaks the soils, and encourages healthy root growth.*

☐ **Tepid water**

*Water with tepid or slightly cool water. Very cold water can shock the plant’s roots.*

☐ **Fertilize**

*Feed your plants with a fertilizer specifically formulated for houseplants once per week spring through fall. Follow package directions for application, and don’t assume more fertilizer is better.*

☐ **Tidy up your plant**

*Remove dead leaves by clipping with a scissor.*

☐ **Rotate the container**

*Each week, turn your the container one quarter around. This will keep the plant growing straight, without bending towards the light source.*

☐ **Keep pots above water**

*Don’t let your plant sit in a tray full of water. The roots will rot.*

☐ **Do use pebbles**

*If your home is very dry, you can increase humidity by placing pebbles in the drainage tray, and moistening them with water. Make sure the pot is above the water level.*

☐ **Mist**

*You can increase humidity and freshen leaves by misting your plants with room temperature water.*

☐ **Wash leaves**

*Rinse your plant’s leaves off in the sink occasionally to remove dust, or wipe with a wet cloth.*

☐ **Prune**

*Most houseplants need little pruning, but if your plant is getting too large or has an awkward shape, use a clipper to gently trim back to desired size.*

☐ **Transplant**

*If your plant is large in its pot, and starts growing roots through the drainage holes, it is time to move it to a larger container.*

☐ **Problems**

☐ **Insects**

*Check your plant for insects weekly. Common houseplant pests include mealy bugs, spider mites, scale and fungus gnats. Pests can be treated with insecticide formulated for houseplant use.*

☐ **Disease**

*Most houseplant diseases are caused by over-watering. Watch for gray powder on the leaves, mushy or wilted stems, dropping leaves or a sour smell. These are signs of fungal infection, which can be difficult to treat. You can try a fungicide spray, but the plant may not recover.*

☐ **Sunburn**

*Plants kept too near a heat source can develop brown, crispy spots on the leaves. Move to a cooler location.*

☐ **Under-watering**

*Signs of under-watering include very dry soil, wilting leaves and eventual death and drying of leaves.*

☐ **Cold temperatures**

*Plants that are exposed to cold temperatures may develop yellow or brown leaf edges, or drop leaves. Move to a warmer spot.*