



HOME & GARDEN

Home and Garden information center • 12005 Homewood Road • Ellicott City, MD 21042 • 1-800-342-2507

April 2009

Seasonal and Indoor Plant Tips

Culture

- This is a good time to re-pot and divide houseplants. Use lightweight, well-drained soil less potting mixes containing peat moss, vermiculite and perlite. These mixes usually contain fertilizers that will meet a houseplant's nutritional requirements for 2-3 months. When new growth appears with the coming of spring, it's a good idea to resume fertilizing houseplants on a monthly basis.
- Orchids are becoming more common available as houseplants. Many of them are easy to grow and re-bloom. Learn the details of orchid growing by picking up a book on the subject or browsing the many orchid sites on the internet.
- Many gardeners like to move their houseplants outdoors for the summer. Most tropical plants do very well outdoors. But, don't move your plants directly from indoors out into the direct hot sun. The hot sun will damage the foliage and may even kill the entire plant. Instead, move them into a semi shaded location. April is still a little early to leave them out overnight because many parts of Maryland still get frost in April. Very often pest problems like scale and spider mites are controlled when the plants are moved outdoors. The native predators and parasites will move in and help manage them for you.

Insects

- A variety of insects may attack houseplants. You may notice honeydew, which is plant sap secreted by sucking insects feeding on ficus, schefflera and jade plants. This may be caused by mealy bugs which appear as white fluffy masses on infested plants. They can be controlled by swabbing the mealy bugs with rubbing alcohol or taking plants outside and spraying with a labeled horticultural oil.
- Soft scales may also produce noticeable honeydew and can be controlled with a light horticultural oil labeled for houseplants. Spider mites can be controlled by raising humidity levels around plants and reducing dust levels. There are also labeled house plant sprays that will help kill the mites.
- Fungus gnats are small, harmless black flies that hover around, breed in and feed on moist growing media. They can be controlled by being careful not to over-water houseplants. Growing media should be allowed to dry out before watering again.

Have a pest or gardening question?
Call the Home and Garden Information Center
800-342-2507 www.hgic.umd.edu

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