



September Tips INTERIOR GARDENING

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October 1996

- Do not use softened water on houseplants because the sodium accumulates in the soil and can kill the plants.
- Dish gardens designed with several foliage species, possibly some ceramic figurines or driftwood, and perhaps sprigs of unusual fern are ideal for gifts to new mothers and dads and even grandparents on their day in September.
- Be sure to clean the windows where plants will be this winter while the plants are still outside. The difference in light available to the plants will be significant.
- Houseplants that have been outside all summer should be allowed to make a fairly slow transition to indoor conditions. Quick changes in environment can result in yellowed foliage and leaf drop. To avoid injury, bring plants indoors before temperatures dip below 55 degrees F. Check for insect pests before you move the plants; it is easier to get rid of pests while plants are still outside.
- An easy indoor plant watering system can be constructed by inserting an asbestos-glass water wick into one of the drainage holes of a pot. Old nylon stockings can be braided and used instead. Set the pot on a water reservoir made from heavy plastic, such as a large-sized, whipped margarine container. Prepare the container lid by making two holes; one for the wick to reach the water and a larger one for supplying fresh water. This is a highly efficient system for carefree watering. However, the plants should be periodically watered from the top to flush accumulated minerals from the soil.
- Don't wait for frost warnings to move your house plants indoors. Temperatures of 50 degrees F or lower can damage many tropical plants.

Monthly Tips have been prepared since 1986 by various staff of the Office of Consumer Horticulture including Ellen Bennett, Michelle Buckstrup, Susan Day, Susan DeBolt, Sharon Dendy, Kate Dobbs, Sheri Dorn, David Gravell, Virginia Nathan, Jenny Shuster, Ellen Silva, and Ruth Sorenson. Resource material for the development of this information includes the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook; Extension Publications and newsletters from VCE, numerous other states, and the USDA; and an extensive library of over 900 books, magazines, and journals. Project funded by The Virginia Gardener Newsletter subscription fees. Diane Relf, Project Director and Content Specialist.
