

## Indoor Plant Tips - January 2009

### Culture

- Did you receive an amaryllis for the holidays? Keep it in a bright sunny window. After it is done flowering, the plant will produce leaves. For best results, move the plant outdoors after the frost free date May 10th. The leaves will remain through much of the summer and then will die off. At that time the bulb will go through a rest period and may be brought back inside by early fall.
- You may notice leaf yellowing and leaf drop on some of your houseplants. This is usually a result of low light conditions typical of mid-winter or also from over-watering. Over-watering is usually associated with low light conditions. Plants receiving insufficient light do not utilize as much water because their rate of photosynthesis is dramatically decreased in low light. Most houseplants should be watered only when the top of the growing medium begins to dry out. Always use light-weight, well-drained “soilless” potting mixes containing peat moss, vermiculite and perlite they will improve drainage and make over watering damage less likely.
- **Indoor Pests**
- A variety of pests may attack houseplants. They typically are at their peak in winter. Brown soft scale is a common insect pest of weeping fig, orchids, scheffeleria, bay laurel and several other plants. Spray plants outside on a mild day with a registered house plant insecticide, or while still indoors wipe down affected stems with rubbing alcohol. You will have to repeat the treatment about ten days later until certain that all are dead. Always read and follow the label instructions. You may notice pests like aphids, spider mites and whitefly on plants that you brought in this past fall. Often times it’s best to simply cut off and discard infested parts, rather than attempt to kill pests with an insecticide. It may be best treatment to discard severely infested houseplants.
- Fungus gnats are another insect common around houseplants but they do no harm. They are very small, harmless, black flies that hover around the growing media. They breed in and feed on moist media and can be controlled by allowing the media to dry out between watering.
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