

Easy to Grow Houseplants

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We can be thankful for houseplants that provide something living and green during winter. Research is showing the many benefits of growing plants indoors where we live and work. Two relatively easy to grow houseplants are China Doll plant and African Violets.

China Doll plants have bright green, glossy leaves. The plant is light, airy, and fast growing. It may grow up to 4 feet under the right conditions. While it was introduced in the 80s, this is fairly young as far plants go and many people are not familiar with it.

China Doll plant is easy to grow as long as we keep in mind they are a bit finicky about over- or under-watering and sensitive to being moved to new locations. But this is true of many houseplants. I haven't killed mine yet and I don't much of a green thumb when it comes to indoor plants.

China Doll plants do best with bright filtered light or about 4 to 5 hours of full to part sun exposure. Too low of light will cause plants to become spindly.

Use a good potting mix, not garden soil, for houseplants. Keep the potting mix moist being careful not to overwater or allow the potting mix to completely dry out; although this tends to be less harmful to plants than keeping the mix too wet.

Containers with drainage holes are a must for houseplants. Placing gravel in the bottom of pots will not take the place of drainage holes. In fact, gravel should never be placed in pot bottoms as this only raises the zone of saturation and reduces root space.

When watering houseplants, use room temperature water. Do not use softened or chlorinated water. If needed, keep a container filled with water to warm to room temperature and allow fluoride or chloride to evaporate.

China Doll plants prefer warmer temperatures with 65 to 75 degrees F being ideal. A detriment to many houseplants is we humans prefer warmer, dryer air than they do. Selecting plants tolerant of warmer temperatures can increase success.

As China Doll plants can grow, trimming stems now and then will make them more compact and a little shorter. About every few months, pinch back stems, especially any that have become spindly.

For a flowering plant, African violets are one of the easiest to bring into bloom indoors. They're low maintenance and bloom reliably with correct care. Plant sizes range from less than 8 inches up to 16 inches wide and flower color can be white to blue, pink, lavender or deep purple.

A good tip for African Violets is grow them in fairly small containers. They prefer to be slightly pot-bound and bloom better. The rule of thumb is to use a pot one third the diameter of the African violet plant. Also, avoid getting water on leaves when watering.

Keep African Violets in a bright, cool location with 70 degrees Fahrenheit (F) being ideal. They tolerate 60 to 80 degrees F while many houseplants need much cooler conditions, especially at night, to bloom reliably.

For light, windows with a north, northwest or northeast exposure work well. Don't allow the leaves of houseplants to touch cold window panes. Violets bloom well under fluorescent lights and even seem to prefer these. Fluorescent or LED grow lights can be used alone or to supplement natural light.

The rule of thumb for fertilizing houseplants is to go lightly. Every few months if often all that is needed. Use a complete fertilizer, such as 5-10-5, that can be watered into soil.