

GROWING HOUSEPLANT FERNS

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Ferns are popular houseplants but require special care to be healthy. Ferns do best with indirect lighting. A north-facing window is ideal, although during the winter months when the sun is low on the horizon, an east window is fine for these plants. Avoid south and west-facing windows, as the intense sunlight may scald the leaves or fronds of the ferns, depending on the intensity of the light. Ferns may also dry out faster or suffer leaf scald if there is low moisture in the soil or air.

Most ferns like an average room temperature of 65 to 75 degrees F during the day, and up to 10 degrees cooler at night. If temperatures exceed 75 degrees F, you may need to water more frequently. Below 60 degrees, add water only when the soil is dry to the touch. Some of the more tropical ferns may grow poorly, preferring the higher temperatures.

Consistent watering, keeping the soil evenly moist, not wet, is also key to the health and well-being of ferns. Overwatering causes the fronds to yellow and wilt and may eventually lead to root rot and fungal diseases, especially if the pot is allowed to sit in water. Too little water also causes wilt. A few varieties, such as Rabbit's Foot Fern, Brake Ferns, and Holly Fern, are an exception to the consistent watering rule. For these, you may allow the soil to dry out slightly between watering.

University of Vermont Extension, *Growing Ferns Successfully Indoors*

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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