

## **PUTTING HOUSEPLANTS OUTDOORS FOR THE SUMMER**

If you are going to put your houseplants outdoors this summer you must first put them through process called hardening off before they can be expected to survive the hot sun, strong winds and bating rains to which they will be exposed in the garden.

Starting in mid-May, for approximately 10 days to 2 weeks, harden houseplants by setting them outside for a few hours each day. First, put them in the shade and gradually increase the daily periods of exposure to sun, wind and cooler night temperatures. Withholding some water will help them adapt to drying conditions in the hot sun. Do not let them wilt, however. If nighttime temperatures below 45 degrees are predicted, cover or bring plants indoors.

If you carefully acclimate your house plants, you will avoid sun burning which ruins many nice plants. Even houseplants which prefer as much sun as possible indoors often, to best outdoors if placed in a partially shaded protected area. The light level in the shade outdoors is still much more intense than that in a sunny window indoors. Shaded plants are also less prone to drought. Even then, they will need to be watered more frequently than when they are indoors.

Before sitting your plants out, you may wish to repot them into a larger container if they seem pot bound. This is an excellent time to do this because most plants will grow more rapidly outdoors. Plants that are less crowded will also require less frequent watering. You may also wish to fertilize your house plants frequently while they are outdoors because of their rapid growth. Use a houseplant fertilizer, mixed according to the package directions.

Check your plants periodically for insect or disease problems. Many outdoor pests such as aphids or scale will attack house plants. In some cases, you may be able to wash the insect off. In other cases, it may be necessary to treat with a houseplant insecticide according to the directions on the container.

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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