

Meet your houseplants' needs

LANCASTER — When it comes to summer houseplant care, there are two approaches. You can either keep them indoors, or bring them outside for the growing season. Either way, you may need to make some adjustments in their care now.

If you decide to keep your plants inside for the season, check the light where they're located. Summer sun is much brighter than winter sun. This won't matter in some cases, but plants like ferns, many gesneriads, and even some foliage plants may get too much light if you leave them in a south or west window now. Move them to a northern exposure, or provide filtered light for them with a fine curtain or light shade.

One advantage of keeping plants indoors all year round is that they don't have to be reacquainted when cold weather returns in the fall. Growth will also usually be slower than it would be outside.

On the other hand, many plants respond well to a summer spent outdoors. The light is better and the air fresher. But, again, the light exposure plants get can be critical. A north facing or shaded location is good for most begonias, ferns and green foliage plants. Cacti and geraniums prefer more sun.

All plants should be protected from the direct rays of the sun when they're first moved outdoors. Give them a chance to get acclimated first. Too sudden an exposure to full summer sun will injure most plants. Some leaves may turn brown and drop. Others will become a pale, sickly green.

Once they've adjusted to their new setting, most houseplants will grow well. It's a good way to rejuvenate them for the winter months to come.

Dunham offers a few precautions about placing plants outdoors in summer. Make sure they're sheltered from sudden

gusts of wind which might otherwise knock them over, with shattering results. And be sure plants that will be rained on have adequate drainage to prevent drowning. Don't put them in pots without drainage holes, or in saucers that will hold water too long.

Despite these hazards, you'll probably find it easier to care for your plants outdoors than it would be inside the house.

Whether indoors or out, your-

houseplants are growing more rapidly now than they were during the winter, so they require more frequent watering and feeding. Because growth is vigorous, this is a good time to shape them up.

Plants that are too large can be cut back and reshaped. Begonias and foliage plants with multiple branches are the most likely candidates for this treatment.

If more drastic measures are called for, they can be divided as well as cut back. This way they can

be put back in smaller pots and you can grow the extra plants as gifts for friends.

Transfer plants that have outgrown their pots to larger ones, but be sure to break up the root ball first. Do this either by crumbling the root ball in your hands, or by cutting away some of the roots with a knife.

When grown in hanging baskets, vines like bridal veil, wandering Jew and Swedish ivy often lose the leaves nearest the pot. When this

happens, it's time to give them a "haircut." Trim around the edge of the pot to force new growth close to the soil line. (If you want more plants, you can root the cuttings afterward.) After trimming, repot the original plant in the same container, but replace half of the old soil with new.

After trimming and repotting your houseplants, give them some liquid plant food to stimulate new growth and they should soon look better than ever.

Make home remodeling pay off

YORK — Sooner or later, many families decide their two-bedroom, one-bathroom bungalow just doesn't fit their five-member family. When that moment of truth arrives, they have to choose whether to build a new home, buy one, or remodel their present house says Joan Lamberson, York County Extension Home Economist.

"With construction and new home costs what they are, more and more families are opting to remodel," says Joseph Wysocki, Extension housing specialist at the Pennsylvania State University.

Remodeling usually adds comfort and convenience, but it also should be viewed as an investment, Wysocki says. Homeowners need to think about the soundness of an investment, because not all improvements will add to the resale value of the house.

He notes for example, that it never pays to over-improve a home, regardless of the neighborhood. If the neighborhood is starting to go downhill, the homeowner probably would lose on any improvement made. Adding luxury improvements such as a sauna, pool or darkroom also brings little return on your in-

vestment, and narrows the market for the house.

A sensible addition to a small home, on the other hand, will probably enhance its resale value, provided it looks good with the architectural style of the house. Realtors particularly emphasize modern, built-in kitchens, an additional bathroom and family rooms as valuable selling points.

The first step in remodeling a home is to decide what is wanted and needed and determine whether these improvements are feasible. A house should be comfortable, convenient and adequate for the family. If the house has been lived in a while, it's usually simple to decide what needs to be changed.

Make a list of any annoying features of your house as well as ways to solve them. The family's stage in the life cycle also is important in the planning process.

Before you consider adding a room, make sure that extra space won't go unused in a year or two. A recreation room for your social 15 to 17-year-olds may be unnecessary if they will be leaving for college soon.

The family's lifestyle is also important in planning a home renovation. Space for sewing, hobbies, office or recreation are

just a few possibilities to think about. You'll also need to consider the type of entertaining and other activities important to your family.

Some families, for example, will get a lot of mileage out of a formal dining room, while others would appreciate a room that will permit noisy, active games.

Before adding onto a house, make sure the space you have is being used efficiently. Remember, it's generally more economical to steal space from the attic, garage or basement than to add new space. Existing space also can be arranged by knocking down walls and creating new ones as long as

load-bearing walls are left to support the house.

Additions to the home and certain remodeling projects are regulated by local building codes and building permits will be required. So get copies of building ordinances from the local building department and make sure your plans meet the codes. Successive stages of the project must be approved by the local building inspector.

Also, check the deed to the house to see if there are any restrictions. Specific lots, sub-divisions or developments may have restrictions prohibiting some types of remodeling projects.



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