

## House Plants – Moving them Outdoors for the Summer

When summer finally gets here and it is warm and beautiful, we often get the itch to move our indoor plants outdoors. Then in the fall, all back in for the winter. All this moving can be confusing to the plant and hard work for you. Here are a few basic tips to make the job easier and insure your plants will make the needed adjustments.

**Do all plants need to go outdoors for the summer?** No nothing has to, but almost all the plants will benefit from a few months of fresh air, frequent showers and higher light. There are a few like Christmas Cactus and Azaleas that need the cycle of summer to fall to trigger buds for future flowers.

**How warm does it need to be before I can move the plants out?** Most house plants are tropical or sub-tropical and don't want to go out unless the temperatures are consistently above 50 at night. A few, such as Camellias and Azaleas can tolerate cooler temperatures and can be moved out as soon as there is no danger of frost.

**If the days are nice and warm but the nights are still cool, can't I move them out?** Not unless you are sure you could slide them back in the garage, or somewhere else protected if it threatens to frost. Even temperatures in the low 40's with a breeze could "frost" leaves that aren't used to the cool temperatures.

**Is there anything I can do to get my plants ready to move out?** Water your plants well a few days before moving them out and put them in your sunniest location indoors. Check to make sure they are in a large enough container and have room to grow.

**Last time I moved out my plants, they got big white patches on the leaves and looked bad. What happened?** The white patches are sunscald on the leaves. If it isn't too severe, the leaves may recover, but most often, those leaves are damaged and will die. When you first move a plant that is accustomed to low light levels outdoors, place it in a shady area for a few days, then gradually increase its light level.

**Is that what they call acclimating a plant?** Exactly. The process of gradually exposing a plant to different conditions (for example, temperature or light level) is called acclimating and it is an important key to successfully moving your plants in or out.

**How much sun can my plants take outdoors?** That will vary greatly, depending on the variety of plant. Some such as Hibiscus and Citrus, want lots of sun; others prefer what they call high light or filtered sun. Check what your specific plant needs.

**How can I keep my plants from tipping over outdoors?** This can be extremely frustrating and expensive! The easiest way to avoid this is to tie the plant to a nearby railing, arbor or fence with a piece of soft cloth or old pantyhose. You might also be able to anchor some larger plants by putting bricks on top of the soil. If you have room, dig the pot down into the soil at least ½ way and that will help keep them upright.

**Can I actually plant my indoor plants outdoors for the summer and dig them back up in the fall?** This works great for the summer, but is really hard on the plant when you have to dig it back up in the fall. If possible, plant it pot and all instead.