



## Caring for Indoor Plants

With winter, and indeed Christmas approaching, many of us will be buying indoor plants, either for ourselves or for presents. To keep them at their best, the following tips may help you. If you are buying as a present, why not write the shortened advice I have included on a small label and attach it to the plant?

### **BEGONIA**

All begonias need good light and an average temperature of around 15 C (60 F) to do well. Growers are able to produce flowering plants throughout the year and these are usually fibrous rooting. Keep reasonably moist and feed regularly. Pick off old flowers when they die. When flowering is over, you can cut back to about 15 cm (6in) from soil level and keep them on the dry side until new growth appears. However the second season growth is never as good.

*“Keep me in good light, not too hot, and keep me reasonably moist by watering from the bottom. Feed once a week.”*

### **CINERARIA**

These give few problems if kept in a cool, light position and sheltered from direct sunlight. Keep moist but do not over water. Discard once they have flowered.

*“I like a cool light position, sheltered from the sun, keep me moist but do not over water”*

### **CYCLAMEN persicum**

This is one of the most popular indoor plants and is often used for Christmas decoration. It may prove disappointing in warm, centrally heated rooms and a cool hall or bedroom is more suitable, where they will continue to produce flowers for many months. Of course, you can bring them into a warmer room for short periods. Watering is where many people go wrong. They should be watered (from the bottom) and then allowed to dry out appreciably- but never bone dry- before watering again. When the flowers die off remove them, stalk and all, by pulling sharply away from the corm. Any pieces that remain are likely to rot and cause damage to the plant.

*“ Keep me in a cool place, allow to nearly dry out before watering from the bottom. When flowers die remove with stalk by pulling away sharply from the corm.”*

## **GARDENIA jasminoides**

These produce double, creamy-white flowers with a heady fragrance that fills the house, but they must have cool, light conditions to be successful. It is best to water with lime-free water as the presence of lime can turn the leaves yellow. If this happens, treat the soil with **SEQUESTRENE®**. Keep moist but make sure the pots are well drained.

*“Keep me moist using lime free water but make sure the pot is well drained. I like a cool, light position.”*

## **STREPTOCARPUS – Cape primrose**

This is an easy plant. Regular watering and re-potting in early spring into a rich mixture will be beneficial.

*“Keep me well watered and take old flowers off from the base of the plant when they die”.*

## **BULBS**

### **AMARYLLIS (Hippeastrum)**

There are some wonderful varieties of this plant and many are sold with bulb and compost ready to go and with full instructions. They are lovely to give or be given at Christmas time. I was given one called Aphrodite last year and it kept flowering for weeks, three lots of bloom. It was stood on a windowsill where it had any sun going, in a warm room. I followed the instructions regarding watering and it was a delight.

### **HYACINTH**

I have found they sometime “stretch” when they are in a warm room, and for their lovely perfume this is where I want mine. But to stop them from toppling over when they get top heavy, I use small twigs to support them and this still looks quite natural. Once bulbs have been forced into flower they should be planted out in the garden when the flowers die, as they can never be forced again.

You will also find ‘Paper White’ and Tete-tete daffodils in the nurseries around Christmas time and these also make good presents – a reminder of the spring to come.

This is obviously just a small selection of plants available but I hope you will find the information useful. Enjoy your plants.

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