

home/garden

DECORATOR

Decorating For Fall

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An advertisement for B & P Excavating LLC. The background is a close-up of brown soil and clumps of dirt, with a horizontal band of white snow or ice in the middle. The text is arranged around this band. On the right side, there is an inset photograph of a yellow CAT skid steer loader with the number 226 on its side, parked in front of a blue building. The text reads:

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Tom Martin

Sales Representative

660-530-0149

tomm@sedaliademocrat.com

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660-530-4519

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Mendy Kenney

Sales Representative

816-456-3338

mendyk@warrensburgstarjournal.com

Dominic Martin

Sales Representative

660-530-0186

dominicm@sedaliademocrat.com

Michele Newton

Advertising Assistant

660-530-0161

michelen@sedaliademocrat.com

Celeste Forsman

Customer Service Representative

660-530-2072

celestek@sedaliademocrat.com

Linda Gosnell

Customer Service Representative

660-530-0273

lindag@sedaliadmeocrat.com

Nikki Monsees

Office Manager

660-530-0275

nikkim@sedaliademocrat.com

Jamila Khalil

Publisher

660-530-0282

jamilak@sedaliademocrat.com

111 W. 4th Street, Sedalia, MO 65301 • 660-826-1000
101 E. Market St. Suite D, Warrensburg, MO 64093 • 660-747-8123

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HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH SUCCULENTS

By Nellie Palmer

SUCCULENTS ARE KNOWN FOR BEING BEAUTIFUL, HARDY AND LOW-MAINTENANCE PLANTS. HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME SIMPLE WAYS TO IMPROVE THEIR CARE SO THAT THEY THRIVE FOR YEARS. SUCCULENTS REQUIRE A DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT THAN FLOWERS OR HOUSEPLANTS, BUT SEPARATE TYPES OF SUCCULENTS AND CACTI HAVE SIMILAR NEEDS REGARDING SUNLIGHT, WATER AND SOIL.

Succulents thrive in plenty of sunshine, but try not to scorch them. Prolonged direct sunlight and heat can burn their tender leaves. Once these leaves are damaged, they either need to be removed or fall off on their own. For indoor succulents, filtered sunlight from a window that gets sun most of the

day will be sufficient. For outdoor plants it is best to put them somewhere they will get full sun for at least half of the day. Succulents also do well growing under trees which will provide some shade from strong sunlight. If a plant has been indoors for a while, be careful moving it outside because it needs to slowly adapt to the stronger sunlight or it can burn. In contrast,

if a plant is not receiving enough light it will begin to etiolate. This means that the leaves will no longer be compact on the plant and it will stretch out to reach the sunlight. This isn't harmful to the plant, but eventually fewer leaves will grow, so finding the perfect sunny spot for a succulent is important for a compact and beautiful plant!

These unique plants should



also be watered thoroughly, but only when their soil is dry. Always grow succulents in a container with a hole in the bottom so the water can drain properly. Water the plant until the water begins to seep from the bottom of the container. Over watering these succulents can result in rot which causes the plant to die. It is important to thoroughly check succulents periodically for signs of rot and pests. Some species of succulents prefer to be watered very rarely, so it is important to pay attention to the individual needs of the plant. Most of the time it is best to under water a succulent rather than over water it.

Succulents flourish in a specific variety of soil that is well-draining and nutrient dense. Some brands make compost mixes specifically for succulents but it is not always necessary to buy those. Perlite can be used as a mixing agent with any soil to promote draining, while sandy, rocky mixes also work well.



The goal is for the roots to not remain wet for an extended period, since poor drainage is the other main cause of rot with most succulents.

If these simple tips are followed, it's a certainty that you will have success with any succulent plant. Pay attention to how the plant reacts to its care, and remember these tips about sunlight, soil and water. You will have beautiful and healthy succulents for years to come!



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Creating a Stylish Bathroom



By *Juliane Morris*

Next to a home's entryway closet and its proverbial junk drawer, there is perhaps nothing else with so much going on in a relatively small space like the bathroom. Function versus style. Style versus function.

When was the last time a bathroom clean-out and reorganization happened, or when a partial or full bathroom renovation was considered to meet your changing needs and mirror your style, mood and command of space?

How many times a day is each home bathroom entered and used? Is one of your bathrooms used as a luxurious retreat for a candlelit bath soak? Or for simple purposes like hurrying to get yourself ready for work on time, whitening your smile, or as an escape from an awkward dinner conversation?

Consider these exploratory questions about each bathroom. See where your responses take your thinking, and your space and style solutions might surface right in front of you.

- ◆ Do the people who will use the bathroom prefer a bathtub with overhead shower (tub shower) or is a more contained shower enough?
- ◆ Do you prefer to have two vanity sinks or more counter space with one vanity sink?
- ◆ Are there adequate electrical outlets?
- ◆ Do you need to adjust the height of the counter tops or toilet?
- ◆ Could any bathroom areas use better lighting or steam prevention? What about a larger window or skylight to present natural light?
- ◆ Is there too much or too little storage in the bathroom? Can you keep items currently stored in the bathroom somewhere else for the better (surplus toiletries, cleaning supplies, towels and personal appliances)?
- ◆ What current features and in what color palette do you want to refresh or add (sink, counter top, cabinets, lighting, shower head, shower tile, etc.)?
- ◆ Do you care about spacious showers with body sprays, hand showers, rain or multiple shower heads, steam function, seats, special lighting, roman step in, child safety or deeper soaker tubs for water therapy?
- ◆ Do you want a radiant heated floor, television or sound system built into the bathroom, or behind the mirror like hotel rooms sometimes have?
- ◆ What about functional, attractive, durable and easy-to-clean flooring, wall finish and hardware for fixtures?

When you have an idea of which questions spark stronger responses, you will have a better idea of your remodeling plan for more space and overall functionality.



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EFFECTIVE USE OF LIGHTING: WHAT TO THINK ABOUT

By Nellie Palmer

LIGHTING CAN TRANSFORM THE LOOK AND FEEL OF YOUR HOME AND IT'S AN ESSENTIAL PART OF EFFECTIVE DECOR PLANNING. LITTLE CHANGES CAN MAKE A BIG IMPACT, SO IT'S IMPORTANT TO APPROACH YOUR DESIGN CAREFULLY TO SEE THE RESULTS YOU HOPE FOR. HERE'S WHAT TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN.

1 | START WITH A PLAN

Before getting into the specifics of the lighting you plan to install, map out your home's rooms and the uses they're mainly put to. You'll likely want different kinds of lighting for a bedroom, home office or kitchen. So it's a good idea to set out the differences before you start on anything else.

For each room, decide which types of lighting will be most helpful. For example, in a kitchen you'll probably want bright, focused light over the main work areas. While in a living room a softer and warmer lighting plan will create a more relaxing atmosphere.

2 | CHOOSE YOUR BULBS WISELY

The light bulbs you buy are central to the lighting effects generated for each room. Decide on

the total brightness each room will need, in either watts or lumens, along with a color temperature that will work best for the mood you want to create.

For example, lighting in a bedroom should be a warmer red temperature with less blue light to help encourage sleep. A home office should have the opposite type of light, with a higher blue content helping to promote alertness and productivity.

Choosing the bulbs you use will go a long way toward deciding which kinds of fittings are most suitable for each room.

3 | USE LIGHTING IN LAYERS

For each room, explore ways you can use layering to increase the variety of lights it contains. For example, making up the total illumination from a combination of high ceiling lamps, wall lamps and centerpiece clusters will give you more flexibility by lighting separate elements, ultimately adding more depth and interest to the room's feel.

4 | USE SPOTLIGHTS FOR HIGHLIGHTS

As part of your planning decide if each room has a particular fea-

ture you'd like to highlight, excluding any functional considerations. For example, a hallway or stairwell might feature a particular piece of wall art that would look great with a soft spotlight or two pointing toward it, even if the illumination isn't necessary at all times.

5 | KEEP IT SIMPLE AND COHESIVE

The opportunities for experimentation are limitless, but when planning lighting throughout your home try and keep an underlying theme to tie the rooms together. If the lighting styles are too different from room to room, it can become disorientating to move between them, risking eyestrain and even feelings of subtle unease.

As with most aspects of decor, keeping things simple where possible will create a sense of comfortable cohesiveness and leave space for more dramatic effects where they'll have a particular impact.

When it comes to creating an atmosphere with your home decor, lighting will contribute just as much as your choice of colors and materials, so take the time to plan it carefully before moving on to more detailed aspects of your decor design.



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USE LIGHTING IN LAYERS

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Pumpkin Cake

with Maple Cream Cheese Frosting

By Shirin Mehdi

This scrumptious cake is a perfect accompaniment to a large cup of hot chocolate. Actually, it's a perfect dessert too. Wait! You could have this all the time. Don't believe me? Try it—it's irresistible.

INGREDIENTS

For the cake

- ◆ 1/2 cup whole wheat flour
- ◆ 1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
- ◆ 1 tsp ground ginger
- ◆ 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- ◆ 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- ◆ 1/4 tsp ground allspice
- ◆ 1/8 tsp ground cloves
- ◆ 2 tsp baking powder
- ◆ 2 large eggs (room temperature)
- ◆ 1 cup light brown sugar
- ◆ 1 tsp kosher salt
- ◆ 1 cup canned pumpkin
- ◆ 1/2 cup extra virgin coconut oil

For the frosting

- ◆ 4 ounces cream cheese at room temperature
- ◆ 2 tbsp. unsalted butter at room temperature
- ◆ 2/3 cup sifted confectioners' sugar
- ◆ 2 tbsp. maple syrup
- ◆ A pinch of Kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit.
- 2 Grease an 8x8" cake tin with a little coconut oil and line with parchment paper.
- 3 Sift as you add all the dry ingredients for the cake in a big bowl. Leave out the sugar for now. Mix well.
- 4 Whisk the eggs and add the pureed pumpkin. Add the sugar and the

coconut oil (gently warmed) and beat until the mixture is nice and smooth.

- 5 Fold in the dry ingredients ensuring everything is well incorporated.
- 6 Pour the batter into the cake tin and tap gently to flatten the top.
- 7 Bake for about 30 to 35 minutes or until the edges pull away and a tester comes out clean.
- 8 While your cake is in the oven, let's work on the frosting.
- 9 Beat the cream cheese and butter in a bowl using an electric mixer at a medium to high speed. Once combined, reduce the speed of the mixer and add the maple syrup, sugar and salt. Beat well until smooth.
- 10 Once the cake is cool, you can layer and frost the cake. Top the cake with pumpkin seeds and nuts to add that extra touch.

Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cooking Time: 35 minutes
Serving Size: 1 8x8" Cake





The Pro's Guide to Pro Profiles

ONLINE PROFILES PROVIDE YOU WITH ALL THE INFO YOU NEED WHEN HIRING A PROFESSIONAL. UNDERSTANDING HOW TO READ PRO PROFILES PROPERLY WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH IN-DEPTH INSIGHTS THAT WILL GUIDE YOUR HIRING DECISIONS.

By Nellie Palmer

GETTING STARTED

When you look for a handyman make sure you have all the documents before hiring a pro.

Insurance provides you with a financial safeguard when carrying out a home renovation project. Check your current insurance and find out if you're covered. If not, use an insurance comparison website to find the best deals available.

GET TO KNOW YOUR PRO

Make sure you do the two following things to determine the legitimacy of any potential hire:

1. Read Their Credentials

Read a pro's credentials online. You can discover more about their background, education and objectives.

A pro's profile is a resume where you can read about what they do and what makes them different from the rest. You can also find out how many people have hired them in the past.

Look for credentials that prove a pro's worth like "top pro" badges that are awarded to top-rated contractors.

Also look for a license and background badge, which verifies

their license number and certifies a background check.

2. Check Out Customer Reviews

Make sure you find out what customers are really saying about a pro by reading verified reviews online.

Remember, not every review will be 100 percent truthful. What's important is how a pro responds to negative feedback. This provides you with insight into how they deal with customers.

DIG DEEPER

Once you've uncovered the basics you need to dig deeper. After all, you're inviting a stranger to your home and giving them your hard-earned cash.

FOLLOW THESE THREE TIPS:

1. Ask Questions

The more information you have about a pro, the better.

Ask your pro some of the following questions:



- What inspired you to do this job?
- Do you have references from previous customers?
- Do you have a portfolio of your work?

You can ask these questions via email, live chat or phone. The best pros will respond quickly and honestly.

2. Keep Digging

Use resources like the Better Business Bureau, the Federal Trade Commission and local business directories to find out about their previous work.

You should also ask friends and family to find out if they have worked with a particular pro before.

It is important a pro has the right documentation. Ask your contractor about their occupational license and verify this information with the right state or local government department. The National Occupational Licensing Database is a good place to start.

3. Verify Their Insurance

Ask a pro about their insurance and find out whether they are covered. The last thing you want is to discover that your contractor has no insurance when they are halfway through a home renovation project.

LAY DOWN THE LAW

Start by agreeing on a price for your project. Then figure out a payment method. Will you pay your contractor upfront in installments or settle the bill at the end? What method will you use to pay? It's important to establish all of this information before the pro starts working.

Also create a written agreement that includes all the requirements for the project. This should include the

number of expected working hours, for example.

Some of the tips above might seem unnecessary but it's better to be safe than sorry. After all, you've read the horror stories. Reading through a pro's profile, digging deeper for more information and laying down some ground rules will ensure everything runs smoothly.



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Pecan Raisin Bread

By Shirin Mehdi

There is nothing more delectable than the smell of warm bread wafting through the house. With a hint of raisins and pecans, this subtly sweet bread will be a winner at breakfast and on popular demand for lunch and dinner. Spread some homemade maple butter on a slice of warm, mildly toasted bread and you will be addicted. This recipe is made using a bread machine that will make your bread baking experience perfect—every-single-time!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 egg
- 8 tsp butter
- 1 cup + 2 tbsps water
- 4 cups bread flour
- 1/4 cup nonfat dry milk powder
- 1 tbsp active dry yeast
- 6 tbsps sugar
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Measure your ingredients and keep them aside.
- 2 Add all the wet ingredients in your bread machine (add only one cup of water to start off with), followed by the dry ingredients (except the pecans and the raisins) and finally the yeast. Check for instructions on this, in the manual of your bread machine, each one is different.
- 3 Choose either the basic or the sweet bread setting.
- 4 Once you start the machine and the ingredients start to mix, check back in five minutes to add more water or flour if needed.
- 5 Before your machine does the final knead (you'll know—your machine will give you a signal), add the raisins and pecans.
- 6 The whole process should take between 2.5 to 3 hours. When it's done, you'll have this warm beautiful golden crust.
- 7 You can serve warm, toasted, or at room temperature with some plain or flavored butter.
- 8 This is a recipe for an easy maple butter—whip up a teaspoon of maple syrup with about 4 tablespoons of unsalted butter. Add a pinch of salt to this, mix well, and refrigerate.

WASN'T THAT EASY?

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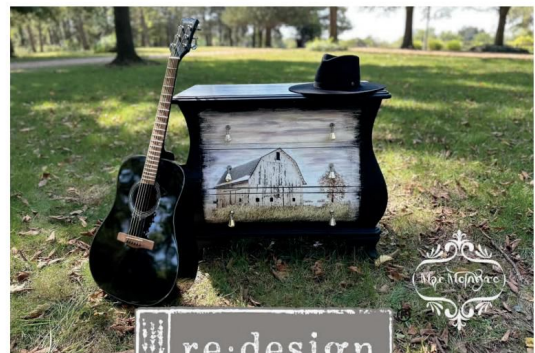
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Patio Ideas

MAKING THE MOST OF SMALL OUTDOOR SPACES

By Michele Robert Poche

IT IS IMPORTANT TO PLAN SMALL OUTDOOR AREAS PROPERLY TO ENSURE THAT YOU MAKE THE MOST OF THE SPACE AVAILABLE. GOOD USE OF COLOR, LIGHTING, TEXTURE AND POTTED PLANTS CAN HELP TO TRANSFORM AN OUTDOOR AREA AND EXTEND YOUR LIVING SPACE. A WELL-DESIGNED OUTDOOR SPACE CAN BE USED YEAR ROUND TO ENABLE YOU TO MAXIMIZE OUTDOOR LIVING.

CONSIDER THE ASPECT OF YOUR OUTDOOR SPACE

Before getting started on your new outdoor project, you need to consider the aspect of your patio or balcony. For example, if the area is in full sun for most of the day, you will need to think about adding some shade in the form of an umbrella, drapes, or a trellis covered in climbing plants—which can also help to screen off an unpleasant view. A wind break can be added if the area is frequently invaded by a cool breeze.

SMALL WATER FEATURES

Don't let limited space discourage you from enjoying a water feature. You can purchase mini, self-contained water features that are perfect for small spaces. If you get plenty of sunlight on your patio or balcony, you could even opt for a solar-powered water feature, which are particularly useful if you don't have a nearby power source.

DECORATE THE FLOOR

Painting the floor of your patio or balcony can help to make the area

look larger. Adding an outdoor rug will add interest to the area as well as provide a softer surface to walk on. Bold colors, patterns and textures can make your outside space look and feel more comfortable.

ADD CUSHIONS AND TROWS

Cushions and throws can transform rugged into cozy, and matching your outdoor and indoor palettes will create a seamless transition between these areas.

USE CUSTOM-MADE FURNITURE

Custom-made furniture is a great choice for small outdoor spaces, as it allows you to purchase items that fit exactly in the space available. Benches can create a warm and comfortable area to welcome guests and work with a variety of decor options, such as tables and soft outdoor furnishings. You could also consider multi-functional furniture like a bench that doubles as storage, helping keep your outside area tidy and organized.

Drapes can add class, a bit of shade and some privacy to your patio or balcony. Choose fabrics and colors that match your other items and use tiebacks to keep the drapes out of the way. If you don't have anywhere to hang your drapes from, buying a wooden frame will provide a place to effectively hang them,

THINK ABOUT LIGHTING AND HEATING

Lighting is an important addition to your outside space, as it adds

mood and crucial light to certain areas. You can use various types of lighting products such as small lanterns, fairy lights, and candles. Colorful bulbs can also add more interest and atmosphere.

If you are hoping to use your patio or balcony all year round, then a patio heater or fire pit can help to add some warmth. Fire pits are particularly useful, as they can also be used for cooking and placing food and drink around the edge of the table.

POTTED PLANTS

Potted plants are a crucial addition to any outdoor area that add lots of color and texture. Pots are also extremely versatile because you can move them around until you find the right balance of color, size and texture in each area of your courtyard. But don't get too carried



away with the amount of pots you purchase or your limited outdoor space will end up looking cluttered.

ADD A LITTLE FRAGRANCE

Your patio or balcony can be made even more enjoyable by the addition of fragrance, and this can come from an array of potted plants and scented candles. You should aim to plant a good selection of fragrant flowers and orchestrate a succession of beautiful scents throughout the year.

It is important to make good use of as much of your outdoor area as possible and that includes using the walls and floor.

You could even choose a theme for your outdoor space, such as a tropical oasis or a Japanese garden. Whatever you decide to do with your outside space, it is sure to be a beautiful area that you will be able to enjoy for many years to come.



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GET READY FOR
THANKSGIVING
WITH

Easy Fall Decor

By Colleen McMahon

WHETHER YOU ARE PLANNING TO HOST A BIG THANKSGIVING GATHERING, ENTERTAIN SMALL INTIMATE GROUPS OF FRIENDS, OR JUST ENJOY THE SEASON IN YOUR HOME SANCTUARY, AUTUMN IS A GREAT TIME TO CHANGE UP YOUR HOME DECOR. HERE ARE SOME QUICK AND INEXPENSIVE IDEAS:



▲ FRONT DOOR AND PORCH

Welcome visitors and add curb appeal with festive fall color around your front entry. A wreath in fall colors is a perfect addition to your door, and you can surround it with potted autumn-blooming plants like chrysanthemums. Pumpkins are not just for Halloween and a whole pumpkin or two can replace tired jack-o'-lanterns once the spooky festival has passed.



▲ FIREPLACE MANTEL

The fireplace is a focal point of many living rooms and autumn is a great time to refresh the decor on your mantelpiece. If you display family photographs there, change the photos to show off recent visits to the pumpkin patch, or a group photo with colorful foliage in the background. Add live or artificial plants with autumnal colors of amber, crimson, and gold. A banner spelling out a word like "Thankful" or "Welcome" is a nice finishing touch.

DECKS, PATIOS, AND OTHER OUTDOOR ENTERTAINMENT AREAS >

You probably didn't use your deck or patio much in the hottest months, but as the weather cools you will want to spend more time outdoors. Give your outdoor areas a good sweeping and hose them down. Add

some cushions in bright fall colors and put out a blanket or two. If you have a fire pit or patio heaters, you can continue to enjoy your deck right up until the snow falls, and it will be a welcome place for guests to hang out when you have a large Thanksgiving gathering.



▲ TABLESCAPES

Thanksgiving is a wonderful season to get creative with table decor. Bring out the beautiful tablecloths that only fit when all the leaves are installed in your dining table, and add cloth napkins in auburn or avocado green. Another option is to replace the tablecloth with a leaf-patterned table runner down the middle of the table, and matching place mats at each seat. Floral arrangements, a basket of colorful gourds, or a simple bowl filled with gorgeous red apples can make an eye-catching centerpiece to your table decor.

COZY LIVING SPACES

As the weather gets chilly or autumn rains begin to fall, it's a perfect time to snuggle up with loved ones, watch a binge worthy TV show, or indulge in a good book. Bring the cozy with plenty of throw blankets and

cushy pillows for your sofas, recliners and bed. Speaking of beds, it's a great time to bring out the flannel sheets for those cold night cuddles.



▲ SCENTS OF AUTUMN

Add to the coziness of your fall gatherings with lots of candle light. Candles in fall colors can decorate your table, mantel and other surfaces. If your Thanksgiving guests include lots of small children or pets that can tip them over, keep the candles up high, or opt for an electronic flame on lower surfaces.

Scented candles come in all kinds of fall palettes, from cinnamon and nutmeg, to pumpkin spice or apple cider. Bathrooms are an excellent place for smaller votive or tea lights with harvest time aromas. If you are welcoming visitors to your home, a candle with a baking pie fragrance will make your home smell delicious even if you haven't started cooking yet. You can also simmer potpourri in water, or make your own with cinnamon sticks, clove and orange peel in it for a delightful aroma.

Although the stores are ready to rush into Christmas as soon as Halloween is over, take the time to enjoy the November Thanksgiving season with fall colors and decor.



THE BEST INDOOR PLANTS *for Black Thumbs*

These days you can find tons of gorgeous homes on social media filled to the brim with exotic foliage, but don't let the urban jungle posts fool you. There are also many people out there who love indoor plants but struggle with their care. It isn't always as effortless as those influencers make it look.

Many people joke that they can't even keep a cactus alive. They write themselves off as "plant killers" and give up on their dream of keeping indoor plants. However, there is hope for those with a less-than-green thumb. Below are some common problems plant owners face, as well as how to shop for plants in a way that suits your space and needs.

By Nellie Palmer

Problem 1: You Have Too Much Love to Give

Some of us have a hard time keeping plants alive because of a tendency to "over-love" them. Generally, this means that you can't resist the urge to give them water even if they don't really need it. If you have this tendency, you may already know that keeping cacti doesn't work for you.

While you'll want to avoid plants like cacti and succulents, some plants that actually need all that attention are pothos (all species), fittonias and ferns. These are all types of plants that need relatively high levels of water, and their soil moisture levels should be checked every few days.



*Problem 2:
You Have a Crazy-Busy Schedule*

It's understandable if you don't have a ton of free time on your hands to dote on a bunch of house plants. Many people have pets, kids, or jobs with demanding schedules, making it hard to give needier indoor plants like ferns and monsteras the attention they require.

If you find yourself wanting plants but are too busy to adequately care for them, cacti and succulent species are the way to go. Most only need water anywhere between once a week or once a month (depending on the season), and they can be made into beautiful, easy to care for arrangements as well.



It is possible to break the "plant killer" cycle, and the key is simply knowing what the root problem is. By using these guidelines, you can add indoor plants to your home confidently and purposefully, working with your space and your needs rather than against them.

*Problem 3:
You Don't Have Enough Sunshine*

One huge hurdle to indoor plant ownership is not having enough natural light in your home or office. Cacti, succulents and other light-loving plants like syngoniums will stretch toward light sources if they aren't getting enough sun, warping their shape. But don't sweat, there are varieties of plants that can grow just fine in low or artificial light.

For offices without windows, bookshelves tucked in corners, or bathrooms, plants like pothos, dracaenas (sometimes known as dragon plants), ferns and sansevierias (snake plants) tend to do well. While any of these would work in a low light office space, it is important to remember that they do need some light over the weekend as well.



Problem 4: Your Space is Barely Big Enough for Humans

These days, many people are living in smaller spaces. Tiny houses are a growing trend and many people are living in small apartments in big cities. Large, leafy plants like monsteras and dieffenbachias (dumb canes) add tropical charm, but their size and the wide spread of their foliage make keeping them in small spaces tricky.

Luckily, there are other indoor plant options that are more compact while still making a statement. Pothos, for example, can grow indefinitely without intruding on heavily used space, and their trailing stems can be trained along walls and ceilings. Other tropical plants like chamaedorea palms (think parlor palms) or syngoniums can be purchased in very small sizes and grow upright rather than spreading.

Cacti and succulents are also a great fit for small spaces. Their compact root systems fit in smaller pots, and they usually don't need to be repotted in larger vessels unless you want them to grow larger (which they do very slowly). If your only available space is a windowsill, many cacti and succulents are available at garden stores in 2-inch pots that fit perfectly on a narrow ledge.



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