

Indoor therapy

Lift winter spirits with a spot of indoor gardening.

Croton

Repotting indoor plants over winter is not just good for the plants, but good for the gardener too!

HEALTH CHECK

Give all your indoor plants the once-over to spot any potential problems. Firstly, check to see if roots are sneaking through the drainage holes and look for symptoms of yellowing or dropping foliage. Check to see if water is easily absorbed when watering. If not, the plant is sure to be root bound.

Secondly, check the plant for signs of insect pests. The main culprits include: aphids (usually green or black and appear on the youngest growth); scale insects (tiny, brown lumps along the stems and backs of leaves); and mealy bug (look like tufts of cotton wool). Insect infested plants may not be root bound, but will benefit from spraying with an insecticide and fresh soil to reinvigorate them.

Tropical Cordyline

REPOTTING



- 1 The day before repotting, water the plant and spray (outdoors) with an insecticide if necessary.



- 2 Gently tap the pot upside down on the edge of a table to loosen the root ball. You may have to:
- Slice off roots growing through drainage holes.
 - Pull large plants from their pot when dry.
 - Break or cut the pot to release the plant.



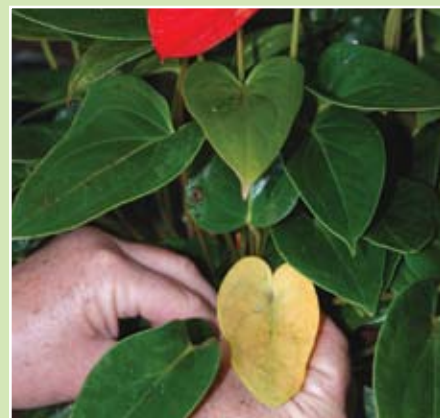
- 3 Trim the base of the root ball by slicing off 1cm (small plant) — 5cm (large plant).



- 4 Remove as much old soil as possible and loosen the roots.
- Slice the root ball of severely root bound plants in several places before loosening roots.



- 5 Using fresh indoor potting mix, repot into a slightly larger pot:
- Increase pot size from 15cm — 20cm / 20cm — 28cm / 30cm — 40cm.
- 6 Place a layer of mix in the base of the pot and compact firmly.
- 7 Place the plant in the pot, adjusting the level of the soil so the top of the root ball sits 1cm (small plant) — 3cm (large plant) below the rim of the pot.
- 8 Fill around the root ball with potting mix, compacting it lightly as you go and finishing with a light layer over the top of the root ball.
- 9 Add pebbles or coconut fibre mulch to larger pots if desired.



- 10 Groom by removing spent flowers and foliage and water to settle the plant into its new pot.



Variegated Weeping Fig (Ficus)

WINTER WATERING

Cooler temperatures, low humidity and slowed or dormant growth, mean indoor plants require much less frequent watering than they do in summer. Before watering, test the soil moisture. Wait until the top 2 – 3cm of mix (3 – 5cm in larger pots) is on the dry side before you water. Apply water until it begins to trickle (not pour!) from the base. Always allow plants to drain and empty saucers so they are not sitting in water. Frequency of watering depends on the size of the plant and pot, plus indoor temperatures and humidity. Larger plants may only require watering once every few weeks over winter. In heated rooms, group plants together on a tray filled with pebbles and topped with water, to just below the base of the pot. This increases the ambient humidity and helps prevent foliage dropping.



Cyclamen

Gerbera

TIP:

Repot flowering plants once they finish flowering.

TOP TEN TOUGHIES AND AIR CLEANERS

If your track record with houseplants leaves a lot to be desired, go for one of our top ten toughies (listed below). But beware; even they will curl up their toes if they are over watered! Several of these have also been scientifically proven to be the best at cleansing the air of toxic chemicals. They absorb gases produced by chemicals, such as formaldehyde and benzene that are commonly used in the production of many materials around our homes. Air cleaner plants are particularly valuable in winter when our homes tend to be closed for long periods of time.

- Cast Iron Plant (Aspidistra)
- Corn plant (Dracaena) *
- Heart-leaf Philodendron (and others) *
- Kentia Palm (Howea forsteriana)
- Mother-in-Law's Tongue (Sanseveria) *
- Peace Lily (Spathiphyllum) *
- Pony Tail Palm (Beaucarnea)
- Pothos (Scindapsus) *
- Spider Plant (Chlorophytum) *
- Weeping Fig (Ficus benjamina and cultivars) *

* Most efficient air cleaners of plants tested

And don't forget Mother's Day May 8th - indoor plants are a favourite gift!



Peace Lily