

Bringing the Outdoors In
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Ahhh. The late fall garden chores are winding down (sigh of relief) and the thought of not having a garden to play in for months at a time might be reminiscent of anticipating a root canal or hearing the screech of fingernails on a chalkboard to some gardeners. So, to satisfy that need, why not bring the garden indoors. It's time to look at houseplants.

Setting up a multi-tiered plant stand near a window with good light is a logical place to begin. And then, literally, bring the outdoors in with plants normally considered the outdoorsy types: Lavender, Hibiscus, Geranium, (scented varieties are an added bonus), Jasmine, Begonias, Azaleas and Abutilon are a few examples.

African violets, Cyclamen, Kalanchoe along with various orchids, cacti and Bromeliads are common choices for the indoor gardener. Add traditional holiday color with Poinsettias and Christmas cactus. Forcing bulbs such as Amaryllis and Narcissus will move almost anyone into the holiday spirit. Bulbs need to have about 10-12 weeks of chilling before forcing; check with your local nursery for bulbs that are set and ready to be forced.

If seeking new indoor challenges is what you are looking for, try these unusual species: the Guppy plant, whose bloom resembles a little goldfish, Lipstick plant, whose bloom is self-explanatory and the Kaffir Lily with its gi-normous orange flowers and lovely strap-like foliage is sure to please. Brazilian Fireworks develop dark red flower bracts from which small lavender flowers emerge—and then wait for the fireworks! As the flowers fade, this plant can shoot its seeds across the room. Bam! It's like the 4th of July indoors!

Bringing a healthy and stimulating hobby indoors is a good thing. Mixing plant textures, colors and species with similar light and watering needs in one container is an artistic endeavor worth trying. Indoor plants add oxygen and help purify the air. Go ahead, challenge yourself this winter.

Master Gardener Note: Interested in becoming a Master Gardener? A new class will be starting after the New Year. Feb 19- May 30, on Wednesdays from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm. Contact: mgtraining @jefferson.wsu.edu