

DECEMBER: Winter Indoor Gardening!

Winter indoor gardening – yes, you can have a garden in winter! Consider trying to grow a small “indoor test garden” at home or at your park and recreation site. Perhaps grow one as a sort of “experiment” to do with your children! You can buy a pre-made growing station, such as the one pictured below and to the right, or you can build your own using some of the suggestions below!

Indoor Garden Ideas!

Location: An indoor garden can take up as much or as little space as you want – and can grow plants of all kinds, even tomatoes and carrots! Set up a table or bench specifically for the garden and be mindful of the floor underneath – there will be water drops and dirt every now and then, so perhaps place your garden on a tile or linoleum floor, or place a tarp under your garden. You also may consider using shelves, which provide a lot of planting room while taking up little space (but because you need to make sure that all plants get light, you may need a grow light on each shelf!)



Light: Plants need light to grow and produce, to photosynthesize (without adequate light a plant will grow tall and spindly, and not flower nor produce!). Even though you think your plants may have enough light from a window, they likely will not, so most indoor gardeners will need to purchase a grow light. Grow lights can be purchased online or at your local home/garden store.

- Because photoreceptors on plants absorb specific wavelengths of light, your light needs to have the same wavelengths as the sun – thus you need a grow light, not a regular light bulb!
- The light should be as close to the plant as possible without burning the leaves.
- Most vegetables and other plants do best with 14-16 hours of sunlight or simulated light. If your plant is not getting enough light, it usually will have small leaves, thin stems, and the color of the plant will be lighter than usual.
- Fluorescent Lights work best for plants that do not require a lot of light, such as herbs.
- The compact fluorescent systems (examples found at: <http://bit.ly/CFLex2> and <http://bit.ly/CFLex>) are bright, and efficient and can be used for all plants.

Temperature: Plants will thrive between temperatures of 65-75°F. You will know if your plants are too hot if they look small and weak; if they are too-cold, they may have yellow leaves that fall off.



Humidity: Winter time is drier than summer, and so ensuring the correct humidity for your indoor garden can be a challenge! How do you know if you have a problem with humidity? Purchase an inexpensive humidity thermostat, and/or observe your plants: if the tips of your leaves are turning brown, the plants look withered or puckered or lose their leaves, you may need to increase the humidity. To do so, try:

- Mist the plants daily.
- Placing a tray of water near your garden (don't put plants in the tray, this can lead to other problems).
- Placing plants close together to create a microenvironment, a sort of jungle, with higher humidity!
- Running a humidifier.

Growing Medium (or Dirt!): Indoor gardens need a different type of dirt than outdoor gardens. Indoor gardens need soil that is loose, drains well, and includes organic matter to hold in nutrients and moisture. Some people find seed starter soil useful, others may use an indoor light-weight soil.

What plants to grow?: You can grow almost anything indoors! Space will be your major consideration. Some obvious choices for an indoor garden include herbs, salad greens, but think about trying carrots, onions, tomatoes and peppers as well!

Watering: Due to the light-weight soil you use in indoor gardens, you may have to water your gardens more often than you would think. Just use your finger to see if your plants need water. If they do, then water, letting the water seep through the soil, but don't let water collect in the tray under the plants or they may rot.

Fertilizing: Even if you use a soil mix that includes nutrients/fertilizer, indoor gardens will need boosts of fertilizing periodically. Choose a vegetables fertilizer and follow the instructions.

Adapted from: <https://www.planetnatural.com/growing-indoors/>



In addition to growing your own Fruits and veggies in an indoor garden, don't forget to search out nutritious produce in the frozen section of your grocery! Review the **November CHG Newsletter** for reminders on what to look for!

