

Caring for Indoor Ivy

Most ivies are happiest growing outdoors. That being said, there are some ivies that do better indoors, often the darker green varieties. There are several ivies that acclimate and do fine indoors. Indoor ivies do best if they can spend about 25% of the time outdoors. Indoor ivies should not remain in the house more than 3 to 4 weeks without some time outdoors in the shade. A week or two of "R & R" outdoors will keep most indoor ivies very happy. Consider having more than one ivy for your favorite indoor spot and rotating them weekly or monthly. Ivies do well indoors if they get good light, consistent watering, good air circulation and are kept cool at night. This can be a little difficult in New England where winter weather prohibits rotating the plants outdoors regularly. Of course, there are some who have just the right conditions indoors and their ivies are perfectly happy never leaving the house.

For us here in New England, there are some things to help you through the winter. It is perfectly okay to take your indoor ivies out on the nice days during winter when the temperature rises above 50°F. Make sure to get them back inside before the sun goes down and it freezes again.

Ivies are winter hardy in most areas of the country if they are planted in the ground. Potted ivy can take some frost if they are living outdoors in pots and gradually acclimating to the dropping temperatures. But plants living in heated houses should not suddenly be taken out to frosty temperatures. Plants are like people, they acclimate to their surroundings but any sudden drastic change could be harmful.

WATERING

Water when the soil feels dry on the surface. Give the plant enough water to saturate the entire root system and drain out the bottom. Do not leave them sitting in water.

LIGHT

Provide ivies with as much natural light as possible but do not locate in a window with direct afternoon sun. If your house is dark and offers little natural light, consider finding a location indoors for supplemental lighting.

TEMPERATURE

Ivies are happy in most any temperature but they prefer cool nights. Most homes are really too warm for ivy. Try locating them in a room with minimal heat. An ideal location is a sun porch that is kept just above freezing between 40-60°F at night.

AIR CIRCULATION

Most of our homes in the winter are hot, dry, dark and have very poor air circulation and we crowd plants together for the little light that is available. These are the perfect conditions for all sorts of pests including insects and diseases. Do not locate plants near the door where they get blasts of cold air regularly. Space them out and make sure they are getting some air movement.

HUMIDITY

Ivies do like some humidity. If your house has forced hot air heat you might want to consider a way to add moisture to the air. It can be as simple as setting a container of water in among your house plants. Another helpful solution is the pebble tray. Fill a shallow tray with pebbles, add water to the tray until it nearly covers the pebbles. You can set the pots of ivy right on top of the tray. As the water evaporates it will add moisture to the air around the plants. Never allow the pots of ivy to sit in the water. A word of caution: do not allow the humidity to be too high in hot dark houses with little or no air circulation. That can be worse than no humidity. The pests that will attack your plants love those conditions.

GENERAL CARE

It is extremely important to keep your ivies maintained during the winter indoors. They are already facing a challenge. Keep brown or black leaves removed. Check for insects weekly. A monthly soapy water bath is highly recommended. These simple cultural practices will keep the ivy healthy and better equipped to handle the stresses of a long cold winter. Once spring has arrived and all danger of frost is over, move your indoor ivy plants outside in the shade. Never take plants that have been indoors for a prolonged period outside into direct sunlight. They can gradually acclimate to considerable sun but will be very happy in filtered light especially if they are going back indoors.

Adapted from srtopiary.com

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