



## Eight Houseplants for Low Light Situations

Spending a little time observing and evaluating an area you wish to fill with greenery is helpful in order to find the right plants for the available light. Judging the quality of light, however, is somewhat subjective for anything less than direct sun. Here are the parameters we use to define low-light situations and a few examples for comparison:

- **Shade / Poor Light:** well away (more than 8 feet) from a window; areas such as hallways, staircases, corners, or next to windows obstructed by trees or buildings; an area where there is no direct light but where at least part of the day you could read a book without turning on a lamp.
- **Semi-Shade / Moderate Light:** within 5 – 8 feet of a bright or sunlit window; close to a sunless (north-facing) window; or where light from the window is reduced by trees or structures outside for all or part of the day.
- **Bright but Sunless / Indirect Light:** within the area about 5 feet from a bright window which is sunlit for part of the day; in east- or west-facing rooms; a large, sunless windowsill; or a room whose southern windows are shaded by translucent curtains or filtered by nearby leafy trees.

Plants who prefer bright but sunless light may adapt to semi-shade conditions and some semi-shade plants can adapt to shade for a while, some even permanently. During winter months, the intensity of sunlight is lower and the angle of light coming into your home will be different. This means that plants which prefer indirect light will benefit by being closer to the sunny windows and even those who don't like direct light will be happy moving closer to it for a winter vacation.

## A Continuum of Light: Our Favorite Choices

### ***Aglaonema* hybrids – Chinese Evergreen**

Light: **Low** to moderate light

Temperature: Average: 65° - 75° must be above 55°

Moisture: Lightly moist

Fertilization: Once a month at ½ strength from spring through

Humidity: Can take dry air; do not mist

summer only; nothing in fall and winter

Notes: Keep away from drafts, doesn't like cold air; misting will cause fungal spots on leaves; grows from a central crown, do not prune; keep rootbound, repot only when it has outgrown its pot; roots easily in water; flowers may attract scale insects; berries and sap are toxic when ingested

### ***Epipremnum aureum* and *Scindapsus pictus* – Pothos, Devil's Ivy**

Light: **Low** to indirect light; no direct sun

Temperature: Average to warm: 65° - 85°

Moisture: Let dry somewhat before watering

Fertilization: Once every two weeks at ½ strength from spring

Humidity: Average room humidity

through fall only; once a month in winter

Notes: Can take fluorescent light; vigorous; trails to eight feet or tie up to climb; cut back twice a year to promote branching; these cuttings will root easily; repot in spring only when it has outgrown its pot

### ***Anthurium scherzerianum* – Flamingo Flower**

Light: **Moderate** light; no direct sun      Temperature: Average: 65° - 75°  
Moisture: Consistently moist      Fertilization: Once every two weeks at ½ strength from spring  
Humidity: Moderate to high humidity      through summer only; nothing in fall and winter  
Notes: Epiphyte; one of the few flowering plants for moderate light; yellow leaves are a sign of overwatering; wipe leaves often to remove dust; divide crowded clumps when repotting to start new plants; leaves are toxic when ingested

### ***Calathea*, *Maranta*, *Ctenanthe* and *Stromanthe* – Peacock Plant, Prayer Plant**

Light: **Moderate** light; no direct sun      Temperature: Average to warm: 70° - 85° must be above 60°  
Moisture: Consistently moist; drier in winter      Fertilization: Once a month at ½ strength from spring through  
Humidity: Needs high humidity; likes misting      fall only; nothing in winter  
Notes: Protect from drafts; sensitive to chemicals, allow water to sit overnight before applying or misting; pale leaves indicate lack of nitrogen or iron; yellow or brown leaves indicate dry air; prune lightly in fall; re-pot every other year

### ***Monstera deliciosa* – Swiss Cheese Plant**

Light: **Moderate** light; no direct sun      Temperature: Average to warm: 65° - 85°  
Moisture: Let dry somewhat before watering      Fertilization: Once every two weeks at ½ strength from spring  
Humidity: Moderate to high humidity      through fall only; nothing in winter  
Notes: Slashes and slits in leaves appear with maturity and brighter light; tuck lower aerial roots back into the pot, train others up a moss pole; leaves are toxic when ingested and a skin irritant; often confused with *Philodendron bipinnatifidum*

### ***Cryptanthus* / *Guzmania lingulata* / *Neo-regalia carolinae* – Terrestrial and Epiphytic Bromeliads**

Light: **Bright**, indirect light; no direct sun      Temperature: Average: 70° - 75°  
Moisture: Consistently moist      Fertilization: Once a month at ½ strength from spring through  
Humidity: Needs high humidity; mist in summer      summer only; nothing in fall and winter  
Notes: Can take fluorescent light; direct sun causes brown spots on leaves; sensitive to chemicals, allow water to sit overnight before applying; flowers appear after 3 years after which mother plant dies; baby plants (pups) appear at base of plant, transplant when they reach 3", keeping the humidity high for the first month

### ***Dracaena* spp – Corn Plant, Dragontree**

Light: **Bright**, indirect light      Temperature: Average: 65° - 75° must be above 55°  
Moisture: Lightly moist; drier in winter      Fertilization: Once a month at ½ strength from spring through  
Humidity: Average room humidity      fall only; nothing in winter  
Notes: Best foliage color with indirect light; slow-growing and long-lived; cut off cane to control height, new growth will sprout from cut stems; keep rootbound; watch for spider mites; leaves are toxic to pets when ingested

### ***Schefflera* spp. – Umbrella Tree**

Light: **Bright**, indirect light; no direct sun      Temperature: Average: 65° - 75° must be above 45°  
Moisture: Let dry somewhat before watering      Fertilization: Once a month at ½ strength year-round  
Humidity: Average room humidity  
Notes: Keep away from drafts; somewhat sensitive to change; yellow leaves are sign of overwatering; prune back leggy plants to stimulate new growth; taller plants may need support; mature plants produce clinging, aerial roots