

Outdoor Tropicals

Outdoor tropicals are plants that are colorful and love the summer heat but cannot handle freezing temperatures. These plants are very popular for containers on the patio, around pools and to add a pop of color to your front porch. They will need to be brought inside for the winter and can be put back out in the spring once we warm up. **I recommend bringing tropicals in when it gets below 50 degrees.**

Although most outdoor tropicals need full sun, meaning 6+ hours of sun. There are some that will need full shade, morning sun only, or dappled sun all day.

When bringing in plants for the winter here are some things to remember:

- Always inspect plants for insects.

- Treat with systemic, 2 weeks prior to bringing them in, to help prevent aphids, mealy bugs, scale, and spider mites.

- Remove any yellowing or discolored leaves.

- Cut back plants that are too large.

- Have an area ready. Decide if you are going to let the plant go dormant or if you will keep the plant active.

- You want to make sure to have saucers to make watering easier and less messy.

- Some plants will shock and drop all their leaves, this is normal.

- Most plants will go into a dormant phase so they will need less watering and no fertilizing.

- For some plants, be sure to keep them away from heater vents.

- Some plants may require humidity trays for extra humidity.

Dormant indoor care- Place in a cool area that stays above 50 degrees. The plant does not need light and almost no water. If there are signs of dehydration (wrinkled stems) then give the plant a small drink. Most plants will drop all their leaves. Be prepared to do a clean up to help prevent pest problems. It is absolutely necessary to acclimate these plants when putting them back out for the summer.

Active indoor care- Find a place that will provide the amount of light needed for that specific plant. Full sun plants can be put in a south or west facing window with direct unfiltered sunlight. Cut back on watering. Avoid heater vents and for some plants you will need to provide a humidity tray. Plants might stress and drop leaves, that is normal and nothing to worry about. Watch for pests such as mealy bugs, spider mites, and aphids.

When moving plants out for the summer here are a few tips:

For full sun plants that have been inside, be sure to acclimate them to the sunlight. Moving from indoors straight out into full sun can cause sunburn or leaf scorch.

Spring is a good time for propagating plants, because this is the start of their growing season. Use a rooting powder when rooting cuttings. Most cuttings will need to callous over for a few days before potting. For some plants all you need to do is divide them instead of taking cuttings.

Blooming:

Plumeria- full sun, bring in at 50 degrees, use well-draining soil or add perlite or pumice, they need to completely dry out before watering, High phosphorus fertilizer every 2-3 weeks from spring to fall (during growing season), Propagate with stem cuttings.

Ixora- full sun, bring in at 50 degrees, well-draining soil, highly acidic, keep moist but not soggy, are not drought tolerant, High humidity indoors, fertilizer for acid loving plants (hydrangea, magnolias), propagate with stem cuttings and use rooting powder.

Tropical Hibiscus- Full sun with shade in the hot afternoon if you start getting leaf scorch, bring in at 50 degrees, keep consistently moist, they do not like to dry out, use hibiscus food.

Bougainvillea- full sun, well-draining soil, they light to be in tight containers, neglect is great for blooming, overwatering can cause root rot and reduces blooms, bring in at 40 degrees, use bougainvillea food.

Crossandra (shade)- Direct sun will burn the leaves, it needs bright but indirect light, bring in at 55 degrees, slightly acidic, add peat moss to soil, keep consistently moist but not soggy, never use cold water it can shock the roots, likes high humidity, deadhead, propagate with stem cuttings and use rooting powder.

Mandevilla vs Dipladenia- all dipladenias are basically mandevillas, the difference is their growth habit. Mandevillas are fast growing, vining plants that climb. Dipladenias are compact, bushy shrubs that naturally cascade.

Mandevilla - Full sun, need 6 hours plus for good blooming, but like afternoon shade in hotter climates to prevent leaf scorch. Bring in at 50 degrees. Feed twice a month to encourage blooming. Lightly trim the tips to encourage a bushier plant. They will need a trellis or obelisk to grow on.

Dipladenia- Same basic care as the mandevilla but does not need a trellis.

Bird of Paradise- Full sun to part shade. Water thoroughly and then let it mostly dry out before watering again. Bring in at 50 degrees. They like high humidity so use a pebble tray indoors and avoid heater vents. Propagate by dividing.

Fruiting:

Meyer Lemon-Needs 6-8 hours of direct sun. They need consistent watering, but do not keep soggy. Feed during the growing season with citrus fertilizer. Bring in below 50 degrees. Might shock when brought in or taken out, will cause leaf drop. Indoors a pebble tray for humidity is recommended.

Mexican Lime-Same care as the Meyer Lemon.

Banana(some are perennial here)- Know which variety you have! Some can be planted in the ground and grown as perennials here and some will need to be brought in for the winter.

Dragon Fruit- It is considered a tropical cactus. It needs 6-8 hours of direct sun. Watch for sunburn in extreme temperatures, it may need some late afternoon shade. It will need more watering than a regular desert cactus. You can propagate with stem cuttings. They need a balanced slow-release fertilizer monthly until they start blooming and then switch to a high phosphorus fertilizer. They are a climbing plant and will need a strong trellis to climb on. Once they reach the top of the trellis let them hang down, this will help with blooming and fruiting.

Greenery:

Pigmy date palm- Need full to partial shade, at least 6 hours of sun. They prefer shade during the heat of the day. **Use a special palm food when fertilizing. Palms can get Frizzle top from a manganese deficiency, high ph soil(alkaline), or cold soil.** They do have thorns so be careful when handling and removing old fronds.

Sago Palm- They like bright indirect sunlight or dappled shade. Their trunk stores water so let the soil dry out before watering and then soak thoroughly when watering. Although they are not truly palms (they are cycads) use a palm food when fertilizing. Propagate by removing pups that form at the base of the plant. Let them callus over for a few days then use a rooting powder when placing them in soil. The leaves have sharp edges, wearing gloves is recommended.

Kimberly Queen(shade)- They like bright indirect light, even some morning sun. They like regular watering but do not like to stay wet, this can cause root rot. Cut back on watering when brought indoors. Use a pebble tray for extra humidity when inside and make sure they are not placed near a heater vent. Use a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20 mixed at half strength or 10-10-10.

Macho Ferns(shade)- Same care as the Kimberly Queen fern.

Crotons- They like bright indirect light. Morning sun and afternoon shade or dappled sun all day. Hot afternoon sun can burn the leaves. Water regularly, they do not like to dry out, but do not keep them soggy. Indoors place them on a pebble tray for extra humidity and keep away from heater vents. Watch for spider mites.

Cacti, Jungle cacti, and Succulents:

Madagascar Palms- Needs at least 6 hours of direct sunlight. Indoors, place in a south or west window. When moving out for the summer be sure to acclimate it to the sunlight to prevent sunburn. Let it dry out between waterings and then completely soak the soil when watering. In the winter reduce watering especially if it has dropped its leaves when being brought indoors.

Crown of Thorns- Needs 3-4 hours of direct sunlight, to promote blooming. Indoors, place in a south or west facing window. Outdoors place in partial to full sun, with shade in the late afternoon. Let it dry out before watering and then soak. Reduce watering in the winter.

Desert Rose- Needs 6 hours of direct sun. Indoors place in a south or west facing window, acclimate the plant when moving outside for the summer. Water thoroughly and then let the soil dry out between waterings. Reduce watering in the winter.

Ric Rac Cactus, also called Fishbone cactus, or zig zag cactus- This plant is an epiphyte, which means it grows on other plants. They like bright indirect sunlight. Unlike desert cactus they prefer regular watering. They like evenly moist soil but not soggy soil. Use a chunky potting soil mixed with orchid bark and/or perlite. They do like extra humidity.

Monkey Tail and Rat tail cacti- They do better in hanging baskets. They need 4-6 hours of bright indirect light or direct morning sunlight. When watering use the soak and dry method. Add perlite or pumice to the potting soil to help with drainage. Propagate by stem cuttings.

Most succulents(although not technically considered tropical) like Echeverias, sempervivums, haworthias, Jade plants, and sedums like afternoon shade or dappled sun. Although some varieties are cold hardy here, most will need to be brought in for the winter. When bringing succulents and cacti in drastically reduce the watering.