Your PocketGardenGuide^m



11 Low Light Loving Foliage Plants

Unless you live in a glass house, chances are many areas of your home could be considered low light. What does low light mean? Generally, low light is defined as eight feet or more away from a large window with no direct light. These areas could include: dull hallways, foyers, stairwells, lobby and reception areas, basement playrooms, rooms with dark-surfaced walls and heavy draperies.

There is good news if you have low light areas in your home you can enjoy and grow houseplants! Here are some of the plants that will acclimate and grow in low light conditions. A word of warning with some plants don't expect luxuriant growth! In many cases, the plant in low light conditions will maintain its growth and add conservatively to it.

Here are some of my personal favorites for low light conditions

Cast Iron Plant.

Aspidistra elatior, has earned its name. This traditional foliage plant with long, dark green glossy leaves grows where nothing else will, even under the worst light conditions. Another plus for this plant, it is not too particular about



temperature and gets by with infrequent, but not forgotten waterings. A quick grooming tip: its leaves can be dust attractors; give plants a quick shower to wash away dust. Repot only when extremely potbound in the spring. A variegated form exists and is worth seeking out.

Problems/pests: mealybugs, mites and scales. **Propagation:** division of roots in spring.

Chinese Evergreen,

Aglaonema species, is a good choice for low-light areas. They can be grown directly in water without soil. Used as a table plant or in floor planters, the Chinese evergreen thrives in the home, shopping



center or office. Many fine varieties with interesting color patterns are available in garden centers and florists. Keep the temperature warm, not below 60°F at night. Repot only when pot-bound. Aglaonemas prefer a rich, loamy soil. Allow soil surface to dry between waterings. A quick grooming tip: its leaves can be dust attractors; give plants a quick shower to wash away dust.

Problems/pests: mealybugs, scales.

Propagation: cane layering, terminal and sectional cuttings, air layering.

Zebra Haworthia, *Haworthia fasciata*, is a succulent with white spotted thick leaves that form rosettes and tube like flowers that hang on long stalks. Haworthia will acclimate to low light conditions. Its small size is ideal for dish gardens. Water thoroughly, and then let the soil dry out. Give cool night temperatures (55°F.) Repot only when needed, using a well-drained porous mixture.

Problems/pests: none of any major concern. **Propagation:** seeds, offsets, cuttings.

Snake Plant.

Sansevieria trifasciata, is an African plant with thick, upright leaves striped or banded with yellow or light green. When old, potbound and grown in



continued on next page

Your PocketGardenGuide^m



11 Low Light Loving Foliage Plants

greater light, spikes of yellow or white flowers sometimes grow in late summer. Use a soil mix of equal parts sterile soil, sand or vermiculite and peat moss. Fertilize only about every 3-4 months. The snake plant will tolerate dim lighting but can also be grown in higher light areas. It is a tough plant and easy to grow. Water only when soil is dry to the touch, then water thoroughly. Avoid drafts.

Problems/pests: none of any major concern. **Propagation:** leaf section cuttings, division.

Peace Lily,

Spathiphyllum sp., is a wonderful group of plants for the interior landscape. There are many varieties from which to choose; with new varieties continually being offered at garden



centers and florists. A few things to keep in mind: the size of spathiphyllums can vary; it's safe to say there's a size to fit your needs. Depending on the variety, most have glossy green leaves with long-lasting, spathe-like, creamy white flowers. It tolerates low light, although it will flower more profusely in medium light. Keep soil slightly moist at all times. A quick grooming tip:



its leaves can be dust attractors; give plants a quick shower to wash away dust. Do not allow temperatures to drop below 55-60°F. Don't be too hasty to repot, it enjoys being potbound.

Problems/pests: mealybugs. **Propagation:** division.

Split leaf Philodendron, *Monstera deliciosa*, is a climbing plant that has large, leathery, perforated leaves. Many times this is given as a Good Luck plant when a new business opens. This



plant will require support, often grown on a pole. This plant can easily be cut back to keep it in bounds. Soil should be kept damp but not soggy. Prefers temperatures above 60° F and humidity. New leaves formed may not be as deeply lobed or perforated when the plant is grown in low light. A quick grooming tip: its leaves can be dust attractors; give plants a quick shower to wash away dust.

Problems/pests: scale.

Propagation: cuttings, air layering.

Mosaic or Nerve

plant, *Fittonia*verschaffeltii, makes a
great groundcover plant
that will tolerate low-light
conditions. F. v.
agryroneura has light green
leaves with white veins



and midrib. F. verschaffeltii has pink venation and thicker leaves. Ideal for use in terrariums, hanging baskets or as a tabletop plant. Keep soil slightly moist, not soggy and ample humidity keeps this plant happy. Prefers temperatures above 60° F.



Problems/pests: scales, mealybugs, slugs (outdoors).
Propagation: terminal, leaf or leaf section cuttings.

continued on next page

Your PocketGardenGuide[™]



11 Low Light Loving Foliage Plants

Screw Pine, *Pandanus veitchii*, is a shrub native to the South Pacific. Its white-striped, swordlike leaves with spiny margins are arranged in a spiral. It can be easily conditioned to thrive under low light conditions. Repot only when potbound. Prefers humidity and temperatures above 60° F. Allow soil to dry out somewhat between waterings.

Problems/ pests: mealy bugs.

Propagation: suckers that grow from the base of the

plant.

Pothos or Devil's Ivy,

Epipremnum aureum, is one of the most popular of hanging foliage plants. If preferred, pothos can be trained to grow upright on poles. Keep the

temperatures warm and the

soil slightly moist between waterings. Varieties that have a lot of white coloration would do better in brighter light areas.

Problems/pests: mealybugs.

Propagation: leaf bud cuttings, stem cuttings.

English Ivy, Hedera

helix, offers many varieties from which to choose. Leaf shape, color, form and size allow for interesting uses: pot plant, wreaths, topiaries, wall coverings. English ivy will acclimate



to low light areas. Keep soil barely moist, but not soggy. A quick grooming tip: its leaves can be dust attractors; give plants a quick shower or hosing in the sink to wash away dust. Repot when needed using a general potting soil. Ivy can tolerate low temperatures of 45-55°F.

Problems/pests: mites, aphids, scales, mealybugs leaf spots.

Propagation: cuttings.

Grape Ivy, *Cissus rhombifolia*, is popular as a hanging basket or table plant. This tropical vine has glossy green pointed leaflets and tendrils. New growth is covered with an interesting thin, white felt. Keep the soil slightly damp, never soggy. Enjoys high humidity.

Problems/pests: spider mites, scales, mealy bugs. **Propagation:** cuttings.

Shopping List/Notes
-

About Your Expert Donna Moramarco, Horticulturist, a.k.a. Donna Inte Garden

PlantAmerica Horticulturist Donna Moramarco (a.k.a. "Donna in the Garden") has been helping gardeners solve problems and achieve their dreams for over two decades. Donna has degrees in horticulture and education plus over 20 years as a Cornell University extension horticulturist.