

## IN YOUR GARDEN

### Proper Watering of House Plants

In mid-winter, many house plants stop growing and may even deteriorate. Low light intensity, dry air, high temperatures in the home, and overwatering can cause the typical symptoms. The plants often become yellowish, the leaves look burned, or the leaves are stunted. If the plant is knocked out of the pot, brown roots, or waterlogged soil may be seen.

Root damage can be caused by the over-wet soil, or can be caused by salts in the soil, according to James A. Fizzell, Extension Adviser, Horticulture in Cook County. Salts in this case are potassium, calcium, ammonium, nitrates, sulphates and chlorides that are present in the soil. These salts can come from fertilizer application, from the water used on the plants, or from the decomposition of the organic matter in the soil.

Watering too lightly results in little passage of water through the drain hole and favors salt build up in the pot. If the practice is extended over a long time, the salt concentration can draw moisture from the roots or can actually become toxic and kill the plant.

Whitish material on the soil surface, in patches, or on the edges of the pot are another good indication of excess salts. These salts may also take on a greyish color.

Such salt build up can be prevented by an occasionally heavy watering, leaching of the plant. In doing so, the soil is washed free of the salt, which is carried out the drainage hole. Discard the drainage water, so that none of the salts are taken back into the pot. Excessively saline soil should be removed and the plant repotted.

Softened water should not be used to water house plants.

Another problem is watering from the bottom of the pot by wick-watering or setting the pots in water. Water is taken into the soil through the hole in the bottom of the pot and passes up to the top of the soil. Salts in the water are carried up and deposited at the soil surface. The correction is to regularly leach the soil, or to skim off the salt encrusted top layer and replace it with fresh soil.

The best rule to follow when you water a house plant is to do it thoroughly. In areas of extremely hard water, you may even want to use distilled water for an occasional watering of a much prized plant.

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## REPORT 37% ARE ILLITERATE

TORONTO (AP) Five million Canadians, about 37 percent of the population, are functionally illiterate and have less than a 9th grade education, a new study shows.

Editor's Note - Funny, it does not seem to stop some of them from writing lawn books.

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