

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 ►

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 ►

