

## Calatheas for the Indoor Landscape



The foliage of Calathea is fabulous with its rich colors and interesting patterns. While not new in many garden centers and florists, this plant is gaining in notoriety because of its interesting foliage. I really enjoy growing Calatheas. But that wasn't always the case. My first experience was a number of years ago. I attended a lecture on calatheas and decided to give them a whirl so I bought a few plants.

The first few weeks were rather easy. The plants continued to thrive under average household conditions. Slowly problems began to happen. The margins of the leaves began to turn brown and crispy, entire leaves would then die. The end result, as the plants became more and more unthrifty in appearance, I tossed them.

### Here Are The Rules for Growing Calathea Successfully:

❖ Avoid keeping the plants too moist. The soil should be allowed to dry somewhat between waterings. Even if the plant should wilt, a quick soaking will rejuvenate it (don't let this become a regular practice). If it's kept too wet, leaves will die out and further problems with rot can develop. (Sources state that if you remove some of the dead leaves, new shoots will develop in about one month.)

❖ Calatheas can tolerate low to medium light levels.

❖ Avoid drafts! Keep temperatures in the 60 to 75 degree range. Don't allow temperatures to drop below 60!

❖ Fertilizer requirements will vary. If you are



growing them under low light conditions, use less fertilizer; higher light will require more fertilization. However, do not over fertilize. The use of a slow-release fertilizer is probably a good idea. When you purchase your plant, ask the grower if it's been a regular feeding program or slow release. Keep in mind--slow release is just what it says.



❖ Some varieties worth seeking: Calathea roseopicta, Calathea louisae, Calathea makoyana, Calathea picturata 'Argentea,' and Calathea sanderiana

❖ Smaller forms make excellent tabletop plants; larger specimens can be used as floor plants

Besides using calathea inside the home, I now use them in outside planters. Again, their foliage is so varied and attractive, they don't need to flower. The fact that they do and it's not a showstopper is secondary to their foliage. The undersides of the foliage are also attractive! As soon as temperatures begin to cool in the fall, I bring the plants indoors.

### About Your Expert

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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.