

LIGHT, CONTAINER DETERMINING FACTORS

Indoor Plants Water-Saving, Yet Owners Often Overdo It

By Jennifer Perez

Long Beach is leading the charge in water conservation as the first city in drought-stricken California to implement new water-use rules for landscape irrigation.

Long Beach landscapers and nurseries do their part to educate customers about drought-tolerant plants and lawn-watering methods, while interior plant professionals are reminding people of the water-saving virtues of indoor plants.

The amount of water needed to care for interior plants is so miniscule it's hardly worth mentioning, yet one of the biggest mistakes most plant owners make is over watering.

The amount of water a plant needs depends largely on the kind of plant, light exposure and the container in which it lives. An easy way to check water levels is to stick your finger at least one inch into the soil and make sure it is moist and that the moisture is evenly distributed. For larger plants, you can use a soil probe or moisture meter to check closer to the root ball.

Your plant's container also can determine how often the plant should be watered. For example, clay pots are porous, and require more frequent visits from the water can, while ceramic and plastic pots tend to hold moisture.

It's also important that your plant containers have holes in the bottom to ensure proper drainage and airflow.

A common mistake made by

new plant owners that can lead to over watering is to immediately repot them into larger containers, believing this will give the plant "more room to grow." Bigger pots require more soil and therefore more water — water the plant may not need.

Unless advised otherwise by an interior plant professional, most plants can remain in their original pot for a year or more. Just place the plant and pot into the larger container and dress it up with moss. If you just have to repot it, make sure the new container is no more than 2 inches wider in diameter than the original pot.

Most interior plants should be watered every two weeks, unless

they are located by a very warm window or in direct light (which should be avoided). How plants react to improper watering depends largely on the type of

plant; however a general rule of green thumb: yellow and brown tips usually mean the plant is over-watered, while brown and yellow whole leaves indicate the

plant is very thirsty.

Jennifer Perez is an expert in interior plant care and design and owns "Growing Roots in Long Beach."

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