SpotPlanted

New plant checklist

Tick each step as you choose a houseplant, bring it home and help it settle in.

Before you buy

- [ ] Check the light where the plant will live, and pick a plant that grows well in that much light.
- [ ] Read the plant tag for its light and care needs, and ask for a label if a plant has none.
- [ ] Check how big the plant gets when full grown, and make sure the spot has room for it.
- [ ] With cats or dogs at home, look the plant up on the ASPCA toxic and non-toxic plant list.
- [ ] Make sure the pot has a drainage hole, or plan a pot that does.

At the store

- [ ] Choose a full plant with evenly colored leaves; skip any that are wilted, leggy or brown at the edges.
- [ ] Check the tops and undersides of the leaves, and where they meet the stem, for insects or webbing.
- [ ] If you can, slide the plant out of its pot: healthy roots are white and firm, not dark or mushy.
- [ ] Look for roots growing out of the drainage hole, a sign the plant has outgrown its pot.
- [ ] In cold months, skip plants kept by drafty store entrances or right under heaters.

Bringing it home

- [ ] In cold weather, buy the plant last and wrap it in paper or a plant sleeve before going outside.
- [ ] Ride with the plant in the warm car, not the trunk, and keep its leaves off cold windows.
- [ ] Keep the new plant away from your other plants for a few weeks, and keep checking it for pests.

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The first weeks

- [ ] Keep the plant out of bright sun for a few days, and don't let it dry out while it adjusts.
- [ ] Expect a few yellow or dropped leaves while the plant gets used to your home.
- [ ] Hold off on repotting until the plant has settled in.
- [ ] Water by feel: check the soil before you water instead of watering on a set day.
- [ ] Skip fertilizer while it adjusts; in fall or winter, wait for new growth in spring.