**Indoor Plant Culture, Part 1**

**Segment for Week of Dec 6, 2021**

This is Julie Callahan bringing you information on shore friendly living and gardening from the Eastern Shore Master Gardeners and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Comfortably ensconced in our warm homes during the dormant winter months, many of us yearn for some greenery inside. Over the next few weeks I will talk about the purchase and care of indoor plants, a hobby that is growing in popularity. This week, I will talk about purchasing a new house plant.

The first step to becoming a successful plant parent is determining what kind of light you have and how much time you’re willing to spend on your plants. Available light and your attentiveness to watering are key to finding the best plant. First, determine where you want to locate the plant and the amount of light it receives. If in front of a window where you can feel the sun’s heat after a few minutes, you have bright direct light. If the space is well-lit when the lights are off, but you feel no radiant heat, you have medium light. If it feels like you’re under a shady tree or if you need a light on during the day, you have low light. A busy schedule with lots of demands, requires a low maintenance plant. Succulents are a popular choice but need bright direct light. Plants such as the peace lily will show you when they are thirsty and do well in low light.

Once you know the type of plant that best meets your requirements, it’s time to make your purchase. Examine the plant closely for insects or disease, generally good health, and well-watered soil. Check the undersides of the foliage and the junction of leaf and stem for signs of insects or disease. Select plants that look sturdy and clean, with no roots growing out of the bottom of the pot. Choose plants with healthy foliage, avoiding those with yellowing leaves, brown leaf margins, wilted foliage, or spindly growth. Plants with new buds and leaves are usually the best quality.

Use caution when transporting your new plant from the garden center to your home. During the winter months, wrap plants thoroughly before leaving the store to carry them to your car. A relatively short exposure to frigid temperatures can damage plants. Place them in the front, and turn on the heater to maintain as a temperature as warm as possible during transport.

Once home, the plants may experience “transplant shock.” This is a natural occurrence but should be watched for sustained leaf drop. For newly purchased plants grown in high-light conditions, acclimate them by initially putting them in a bright-light spot. Gradually move them to their permanent location over a period of 4 to 8 weeks.

For more information or for answers to your questions, contact your local Accomack or Northampton County Extension Office. Here on the Shore call either 678-7946 or 787-1361