



But I Don't Have a Green Thumb
By Barbara Schuchart
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Wish you could have a green thumb? Here are five of the most easy-to-grow houseplants -- enjoy yourself, and give them a try.

Pothos (*Epepremmum aureum*) is a vine with long trailing stems that can grow to eight feet or more. The leaves are oval, pointed, and two to four inches long; they are dark green, spotted with yellow. This plant is undemanding, tolerant of adverse conditions, and almost impossible to kill. Allow the soil to dry moderately between watering, and grow in indirect sunlight -- though it is tolerant of all light conditions. There will be better foliage color with some sun. If you wish, cut back the plant a couple times a year to keep it bushy and full. You can take stem cuttings and make new plants. This is a wonderful plant for beginners.

Snake Plant (*Sansevieria*) is also called Mother-in-Law's Tongue. It is a carefree, tough succulent that can be grown almost anywhere. It is among the most dependable of houseplants. It has rigid, leathery sword-like leaves that are often edged with yellow or white. The plant originated from Western tropical Africa. It can grow six to 48 inches high; you may want to choose a dwarf variety for a dish garden or a small container. It is long-lived, and likes moderately dry soil. This plant seldom needs re-potting, and it can grow in low to bright light.

The Cast-Iron plant is also called *Aspidistra elatior*. It withstands poor conditions and is almost indestructible. It is perfect for a dark corner, but will tolerate just about anywhere it's placed. Don't over-water, this plant likes evenly moist soil, which means soil that is barely moist in fall and winter. Its leaves are sword-like, pointed four inches wide and two inches long. The leaves are and glossy dark green, and do like an occasional dusting. Start off with a large plant, since

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they are very slow growing. They are one to two feet high, and one to two feet wide. It likes a temperature range of 45 degrees to 85 degrees, and a variegated version of this plant is available with white stripes.

The Spider Plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*), from South Africa, is an easy and fun plant to grow. Its stems produce little white flowers that are soon weighted down with little plants which are miniature duplicates of the mother plant. These can be cut off and planted individually, when the babies start to form roots. It forms one to three foot clumps, and has soft curvy leaves like long, broad grass blades. The leaf blades are green with white stripes. These plants prefer bright, indirect light or partial shade and they need regular water. If you grow Spider Plant, you will soon have lots of little plants to give to your friends and neighbors.

The Heartleaf Philodendron (*Philodendron Scandens*) is also known as the Sweetheart Plant. It is drought tolerant, with slender stems and deep green leaves that are heart-shaped and about four inches long. It can be propagated from stem tip cuttings. The Sweetheart Plant is tolerant of low light, and in warmer months it can be put outdoors in the shade. These plants are easy to grow, and adapt well to almost any indoor setting. Mist the foliage occasionally; the plant can climb or trail to four feet or more.

Have lots of fun with these hardy plants and soon you, too, will have a green thumb!

Join UCCE Master Gardener Sue McDavid for a free hands-on demonstration class this Saturday, February 28th: Cutting Back Ornamental Grasses. Ornamental grasses are wonderful landscape plants that require little in the way of maintenance, are pretty much pest-free, and can be worked into many different garden themes. This class will show you how and when to cut back each type of grass to keep them looking their best. Class is from 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, Folsom Lake College El Dorado Center, 6699 Campus Drive, in Placerville.

Master Gardeners are also offering free gardening classes in cooperation with the Cameron Park Community Center; the next free, three-hour class is The Art of Growing Succulents on March 18, 2015 at 9:00 a.m.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at the office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners/ and you can also find us on Facebook.