



# Can you be too kind to a houseplant?

Plants need the correct amount of sunlight, water, warmth and nourishment. You can kill them with 'kindness'.

You can make the mistake of thinking that houseplants are garden plants in a pot and try to water and feed them just like the ones outside. Very often this will cause problems. This is because conditions indoors are very different to

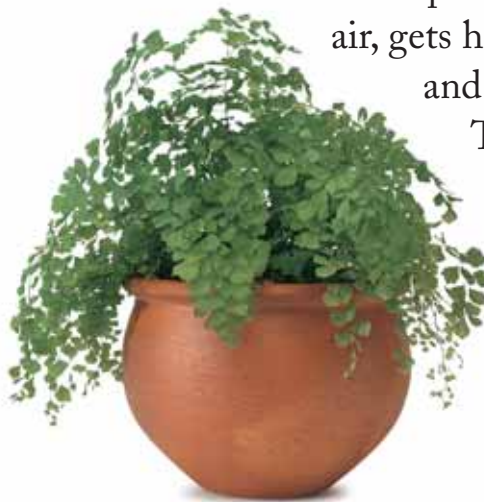
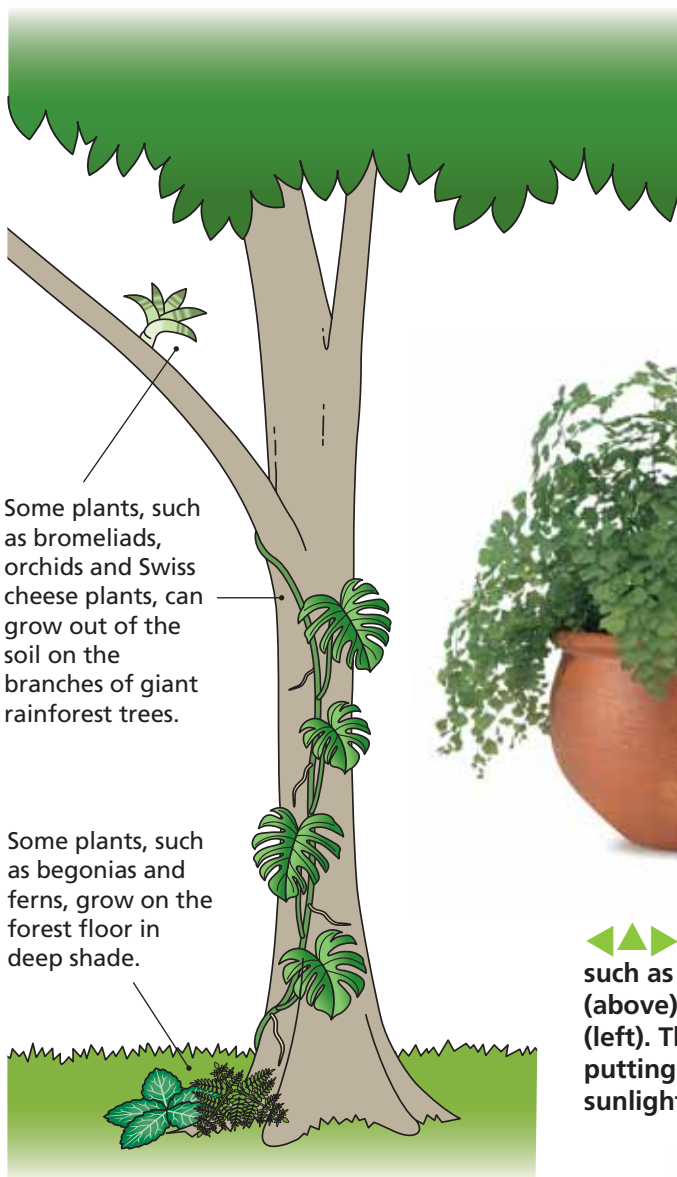
those outside. For example, there is much less light indoors and the air is much drier.

Most of our houseplants do not grow naturally in this country (Picture 1). People have searched all over the world to find plants that we can keep at home. So the instructions that come with the plant tell you how to keep conditions as close as possible to what the plants are used to (Picture 2).

## Plants that keep best indoors

Which plants do you think are the easiest to keep in a room that always has dry air, gets hot in the day and cold at night and where there is not much light?

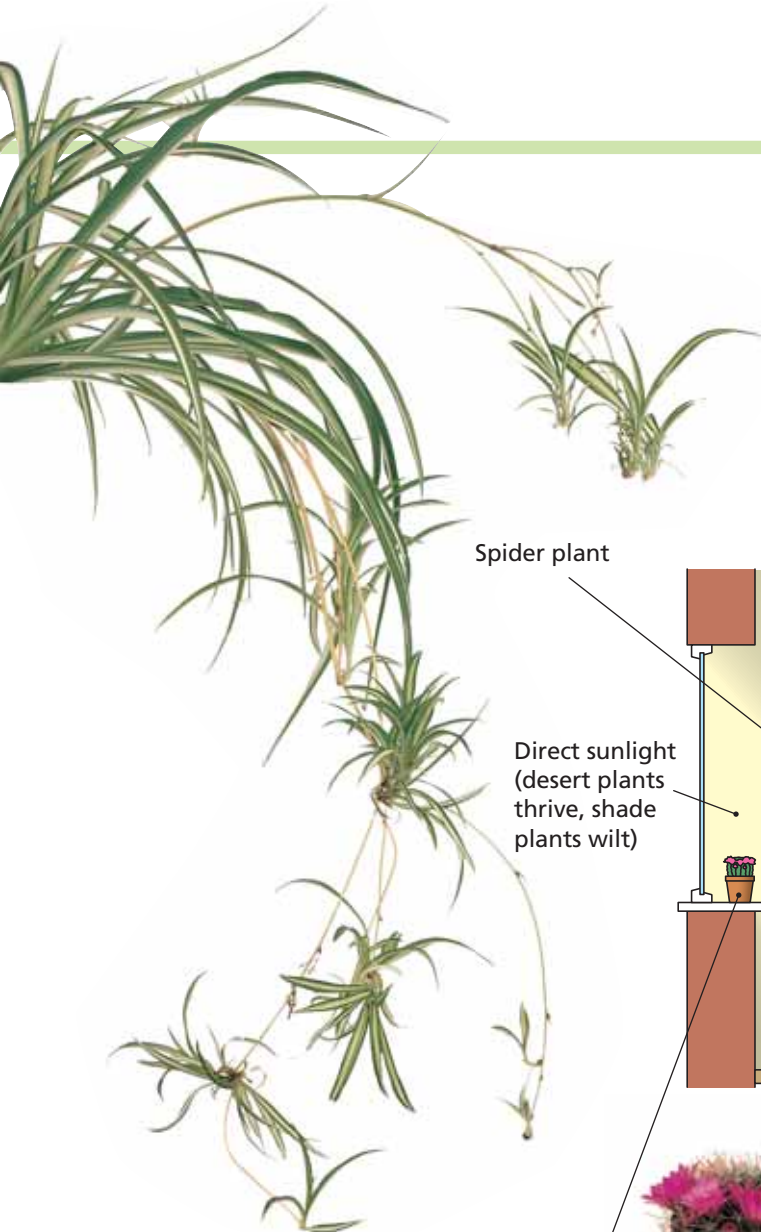
The answer is plants from parts of the world that are naturally like this.



Ferns are plants that grow well in the shade. They get enough light from shady conditions and do not need too much sunshine. If these plants are put in the sunshine their leaves will burn and turn brown.

▶▶▶ (Picture 1) Some houseplants, such as this begonia (right) and fern (above), come from tropical forests (left). These plants need shade, so putting them on a windowsill in full sunlight may kill them.





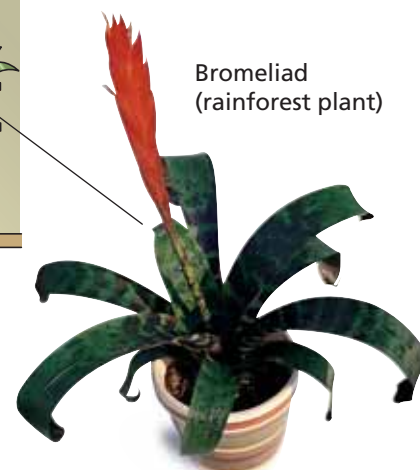
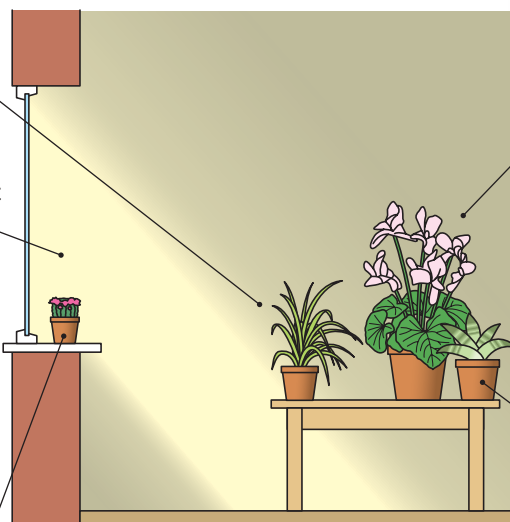
Spider plant

▼ (Picture 2) You can see when you get things wrong because the plant will not grow well. If the air is too dry, for example, the plant's leaves will get brown tips. If you give a plant too much water, its stem will rot. The pictures on this page are examples of common houseplants and the conditions they like best.



Cyclamen  
(mountain plant)

Direct sunlight  
(desert plants  
thrive, shade  
plants wilt)



Bromeliad  
(rainforest plant)

A cactus is a desert plant. It is used to growing in a place where there is lots of sunshine but where rain is rare. It is also used to getting every last bit of moisture from the soil. If you think they would grow better by being given more moisture, then you would be wrong. If you keep a cactus in wet soil, it will have too much moisture and it will start to rot.



Many of the common houseplants are bred from plants that come from drier parts of the world, and that grow in the shade. These kinds of plant will live well in centrally heated homes if they are watered just once a week. The spider plant is a common example.

## Plants that are hard to keep

Which plants would be hardest to keep? Those from places where the air needs to be moist all of the time, such as plants from near the equator. These may look great in a garden centre, but you have to be prepared to look after them every day.

### Summary

- Every plant needs to be given the conditions it grows best in.
- Treating indoor plants as though they were garden plants can often result in disaster.