



Hot New Houseplants!

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The never-ending supply of new houseplants never ceases to amaze me. Plant propagators have been selective breeding and crossing different varieties for many years, as well as scouring their benches for new mutant plants. With tissue culture, these unique individuals can be massed produced in a record amount of time, and become available to the public for a reasonable price. The big box stores just started carrying many of them. Normally I prefer to patronize the garden centers, but sometimes the selection and prices at big box stores are hard to resist. Here is a collection of some of my favorites from this past summer. All require bright, indirect light to avoid burning the leaves.

The first plant on my list is related to the famous “Pothos” types. I can still remember buying the mostly green-leaved common type and trying to find the now common ‘Golden’ and ‘Marble Queen’ versions. The genus underwent some revisions over the years, but the common name “pothos” stuck. This new type is called *Scindapsus treubii* ‘Moonlight.’ This stunning plant has silver leaves with green margins and a green stripe down the middle. Care is similar to the more familiar varieties, but be sure to give it plenty of bright, indirect light.

Next, we jump to another familiar genus of plants – the Philodendrons. *Philodendron micans*, which was its previous scientific name, has become its common name. It is correctly known as *Philodendron hederaceum* var. *hederaceum*. This beautiful plant has velvet-like leaves. Soggy soil will be the death of any of the philodendrons, but they enjoy a rich, organic potting mix. The other interesting thing about this plant is the leaf color which can vary from a green to a red/maroon. Younger leaves can even have a yellow-orange complexion.

The next two plants on my list are the large-leaved floor plant Philodendron species. They come in all different colors and patterns. The first is *Philodendron* ‘Birkin.’ This plant is a mutation that popped up in captivity with white veining in its green leaves. *Philodendron erubescens* ‘Pink Princess’ has pink variegation randomly in the leaves. Until recently, this cultivar would cost \$100-\$150 or more for a four-inch pot. I have just started seeing this in some big box stores for \$20 in a six-inch pot. These large floor-type can get boron deficiency rather easily, and then not unfurl the new leaves properly. The best way to avoid this is to use a complete fertilizer with micronutrients, as these usually have this element.

Zamioculcas zamiifolia is unique from all our other houseplants with its oval leaves growing along fleshy stems. They can get to about 3 feet tall, and can tolerate our indoor home conditions rather well. My new favorite is *Zamioculcas zamiifolia* ‘Down,’ which instead of green is all black. Bright light will help maintain its dark coloration. Although the new growth may be green,

with time it will darken up like the rest of the plant. This genus can handle low light, but should be watered much less than the typical houseplant to avoid rotting of the fleshy stems.

The Blue Star Fern, *Phlebodium aureum*, sounds exotic, but they are fairly easy to come by. Unlike many ferns, this one tolerates the lower humidity in our homes. The beautiful blue foliage is hard to capture in a photograph, but looks stunning when grown near some “normal” green-leaved plants. For all these reasons, I recommend adding one of these plants to your home/collection. It will certainly be a conversation piece for all your guests!

For questions on growing houseplants or if you have any other gardening questions, contact the UConn Home & Garden Education at (877) 486-6271 or www.homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu or your local Cooperative Extension Center.