

PLACEMENT MATRIX

Light & Water by Family

Where each family is content in a home, and how to read its soil. Distances assume an unobstructed window; sheer curtains or a nearby building move a plant one column to the left.

FAMILY	SOUTH SILL	SOUTH, 3 TO 6 FT	EAST OR WEST SILL	EAST/WEST, 3 TO 6 FT	NORTH SILL	DEEP IN ROOM	READ THE SOIL LIKE THIS	DRY-DOWN TOLERANCE
Aroids	Too harsh	Ideal	Ideal	Good	OK	Stretches	Finger to the second knuckle: water when dry there	Moderate
Asparagaceae	Good	Ideal	Ideal	Good	Survives	Survives	Chopstick to the bottom comes out clean and dry	Very high
Cacti	Ideal	OK	Good	Weak	No	No	Pot feels light; soil dusty all the way down	Very high
Crassulaceae	Ideal	Good	Good	Stretches	No	No	Lower leaves slightly soft, soil fully dry	Very high
Aloe & haworthia	Good	Ideal	Ideal	OK	Slow	No	Fully dry; leaves flatten a touch when thirsty	High
Ferns	Scorches	OK	Good	Ideal	Ideal	OK	Surface just starting to lighten; never crunchy	Low
Palms	Too harsh	Ideal	Ideal	Good	OK	Declines	Top 1 to 2 inches dry, then water deeply	Moderate
Orchids	Scorches	Good	Ideal	Good	OK	No blooms	Roots silver-grey and pot light: soak; green and plump: wait	Moderate
Marantaceae	Scorches	OK	Good	Ideal	Good	OK	Top half inch dry, then water with filtered or rested water	Low
Moraceae (figs)	Good	Ideal	Ideal	OK	Drops leaves	No	Top third dry; leaves droop softly when thirsty	Moderate

Why? Tolerance of dry-down tracks water storage. Families with fleshy leaves or rhizomes evolved for drought and rot when kept wet; thin-leaved forest-floor families never evolved a reserve and collapse when they dry.

Winter light is a fraction of summer light at the same window. When days shorten, most plants can move one column toward the sun.