



Watering Decision Tree

Forget the schedule. Test the soil. Decide based on what you find.

STEP 1 · FINGER TEST 2 INCHES DEEP

Dry & Crumbly

WATER NOW

Soil: dust-dry, may pull away from pot edges.

Plant signs: slightly droopy leaves, pot feels light when lifted.

→Water thoroughly until drainage runs through. Empty saucer 15-30 min after.

Slightly Moist

WAIT 2-3 DAYS

Soil: cool to touch, holds shape but no water squeezes out.

Plant signs: leaves firm, no drooping or yellowing.

→Re-test in 2-3 days. Most species prefer this state - do nothing.

Wet & Soggy

DO NOT WATER

Soil: cold, can squeeze water out, may smell stale.

Plant signs: yellowing lower leaves, soft stem base, fungus gnats.

→Stop watering. Check drainage hole. Wait 7-14 days. Repot if root rot detected.

9 Species — Preferred Moisture State Between Waterings

| SPECIES | PREFERRED STATE | NOTE |
|--------------|--------------------|---|
| Snake Plant | VERY DRY | Soil bone-dry 2-3 weeks. Overwatering kills. |
| Aloe Vera | VERY DRY | Same as snake. Succulent rules. |
| ZZ Plant | VERY DRY | Tolerates weeks of neglect. |
| Pothos | DRY TOP INCH | Forgiving but droops when thirsty. |
| Philodendron | DRY TOP INCH | Similar to pothos. |
| Monstera | DRY TOP 1-2 IN | Larger plants need more between waterings. |
| Spider Plant | SLIGHTLY MOIST | Tolerates drought but prefers consistent moisture. |
| Peace Lily | CONSISTENTLY MOIST | Tells you when thirsty (dramatic droop). |
| Calathea | CONSISTENTLY MOIST | Sensitive to tap-water fluoride - use filtered or rain. |

3 Rules That Override Everything

- **Drainage hole is non-negotiable.** Decorative pots without holes = use as cachepot (lift plant out to water).
- **Winter dormancy cuts watering needs 50-70%** on most species. Re-test soil before each watering instead of following summer schedule.
- **Empty the saucer after watering.** Standing water = root rot in 24-72 hours.