



Light Levels by Window Direction

North, East, South, West — what each window actually gives your plants (Northern Hemisphere).

North Window

LOW LIGHT

No direct sun. Steady ambient light only. Often misunderstood as “dark” — it is actually medium-low, not zero.

BEST PLANTS

- Snake Plant (tolerates anything)
- ZZ Plant
- Pothos
- Philodendron heartleaf
- Peace Lily
- Cast Iron Plant
- Boston Fern (extra humidity)

East Window

BRIGHT INDIRECT

Gentle morning direct sun (2-4 hours), bright indirect rest of day. The sweet spot for most houseplants.

BEST PLANTS

- Monstera Deliciosa
- Calathea (all varieties)
- Phalaenopsis Orchid
- African Violet
- Spider Plant
- Most ferns
- Anthurium

South Window

INTENSE DIRECT

Strongest light all day. Most species burn directly on the sill — sheer curtain or 2-3 ft setback for non-sun-lovers.

BEST PLANTS

- Aloe Vera
- Cacti & succulents
- Hoya (sun-tolerant)
- Citrus trees
- Croton (color intensifies)
- Snake Plant (any direction)
- Bird of Paradise

West Window

HOT AFTERNOON

Hottest direct sun 2-4 hours afternoon. Like south but more intense heat — sheer curtain or species that handle heat.

BEST PLANTS

- Aloe Vera
- Succulents
- Fiddle Leaf Fig (with care)
- Rubber Tree
- Bird of Paradise
- Hoya (sun varieties)
- Citrus, with humidity

The shadow test (no meter needed)

- **Sharp shadow** = bright/direct light. Sun-loving plants only.
- **Soft shadow** = medium/bright indirect. Most houseplants thrive here.
- **No visible shadow** = low light. Snake plant, ZZ, pothos territory.
- Hold your hand 12 inches above the soil where the plant sits, at midday.

Distance matters more than direction

- **On the sill** = full window light.
- **2-3 ft from window** = drops to ~50% intensity.
- **6+ ft from window** = effectively low light regardless of direction.
- A south-facing room 8 ft from window = low light territory.

Too Much Light (signs)

Crispy brown patches on leaves facing window. Pale washed-out color. Leaves curling away from window. Soil dries within 1-2 days. **Fix:** move 2-3 ft back or add sheer curtain.

Too Little Light (signs)

Leggy stretching toward window. New leaves smaller than old. Pale lower leaves drop. Soil stays wet 7+ days. **Fix:** move closer to window or add grow light.