



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.