

# Can't Miss House Plants....

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Everyone has got to start somewhere... driving a car for the first time, getting your first paycheck, and eventually your first indoor house plant. You can spend time walking through your local garden center or nursery and pick out "any ole plant" or you can start with any of the **Can't Miss House Plants**. You'll want to have more plants in your home if you're successful and get off to a better start.

These five plants or groups of plants have been selected because they are tough. There's just no two ways about it. Of course, they'll do better if you care for them but they can handle a wide variety of light levels and come in all different sizes.

Three of the varieties... **Aspidistra elatior**, **Chamaedorea metallica** and **Zamioculcas zamiifolia** are selected species which do well. The **Aglaonemas** and **Sanserieva** come in quite a few different species but over all are tough plants.

They're great starter plants for someone that hasn't had plants indoors before but also exceptional indoor plants for anyone. The plants are listed alphabetically... so don't think we're recommending one variety over another. In fact, we'll start at "A" and end with "Z".

So let's get started.....

## Aspidistra elatior - The Cast Iron Plant

It is an old-fashioned, tough-leathery foliage plant. In fact Aspidistra along with the Kentia palm was a favorite indoor plant during the Victorian era when houses were anything but bright and airy.

The Aspidistra Elatior is native to the Eastern Himalayas, Taiwan, China, and Japan. It's commonly known as the "cast-iron plant". Today, in the southern United States you will find Aspidistra usually growing completely carefree as a groundcover in dense, dark shade. It is one of the few plants that we can say helped inspire or carry the lead in a novel. In 1936, George Orwell wrote his novel "Keep the Aspidistra Flying".



Patience is the prime requirement needed by owners of small plants; it takes considerable time to grow an Aspidistra to specimen size. Ironically, like many "folk" plants, it is not always available in nurseries. This is partly because of its slow growth and not properly appreciated. Cast-iron is usually grown in 6", 8" and 10" azalea pots. As a bushy potted plant, 12 to 24 inches tall and wide, the **Aspidistra simply has no equal** and is a **perfect plant for indoors**.

Aspidistra is an **ideal plant** for that **cooler area of your house** to bring the tropics indoors.

ASPIDISTRA will also:

- Tolerate dust as well as heat, cold, wet soil, drought, neglect and dimly lighted places.
- Tolerate temperatures as low as 28 degrees without injury to the foliage.
- Tolerate light levels as low as 10 foot candles
- Make a great addition to cut flower arrangements; the foliage often lasts for weeks.
- Generally Pest Free

**Aspidistra elatior** has cornlike, shiny, dark green leaves that grow to 24 inches long; it occasionally produces purple-brown small flowers near the base of the plant. It also has a variegated form. The white markings help to light up a dark corner rather like sun filtering through a shade tree. A dwarf



form called **Aspidistra minor** or **Aspidistra “Milky Way”** has white spotted black-green leaves. Try to acquire all 3, and then display them in attractive pottery containers.

Aspidistra is such a slow grower and is expensive to produce and purchase. But with all of its positive attributes it is well be worth the price, offering long-term enjoyment and beauty.

### **Cultural Tips:**

Aspidistra gets its name “Cast Iron” from its ability to **tolerate** poor conditions such as low light, drafts and general neglect in watering and dust accumulation both inside or out. It is much more attractive with proper care and will tolerate a wide range of temperatures. It prefers temperatures between 50-55 degrees at night and 70-75 degrees during the day with light levels between 50 and 500-foot candles.

**Evenly moist** but not constantly wet is the ideal way to water this plant, although it will survive forgotten waterings. Clean the leaves regularly and enjoy this tough indoor plant.

## Aglaonema

Commonly called the "Chinese evergreen". The species known as *Aglaonema modestum* is considered to be the first *Aglaonema* to be introduced to the United States around 1900.

*Aglaonemas* are a member of the Araceae family some of their related family members are *Spathiphyllum* and *Philodendron*. There are approximately 50 species.

*Aglaonemas* thrive in conditions that would kill many house plants. *Aglaonemas* are tough, and adapt to a wide range of indoor conditions.

Because they adapt so well they are very easy to care for. Generally, they grow well in dim light and will survive in both, dry and low humidity conditions. They are used as a stand alone plant or in group plantings as ground cover. They are popular around the world.

Depending on the indoor environment watering should be weekly. Many people over water their plants keeping the soil soggy. Soil should be kept moist but not soggy. The soil should never dry out completely. When watering use water that is at room temperature. Allow city water to sit out over night which allows any chlorine to evaporate.

Chinese evergreens cannot be grown in direct sunlight. They do well in diffused sunlight all the way to deep shade. They do best in moderate light such as near a north window. Their requirement is half the light of their cousin *Dieffenbachia*.

*Aglaonemas* enjoy warm conditions between 75-85 daytime temperature and prefer a 10 degree drop at nighttime. Cold, and drafty conditions in the 40's and 50's will slow growth considerably. Extended periods below 50's can damage leaves, stems and roots. "Silver Queen" can begin to show leaf damage at temperatures below 55 degrees and some varieties leaves will yellow permanently with temperatures in the 40's and lower.

One of the great benefits of using *Aglaonemas* inside is that they have few pest problems. Most problems occur on the growing end when cuttings are first planted.

Stem cutting of approximately 6" inches or longer are taken from stock plants. Usually 3-6 plants are planted per pot. Cuttings are "stuck" in a pot containing a well drained soil.

IMPORTANT - Propagation of any patented variety is strictly prohibited by law. To learn more about *Aglaonemas* and other varieties visit <http://aglaonemas.com>



## Chamaedorea metallica

Palms are generally thought to be these great towering plants we can tie our hammock to and watch the sunset. That's true... but, there are also many small palms and a few that can fit very nicely indoors. Here's a "small palm" that is as tough as nails - **Chamaedorea metallica**.

Metallica is very different than most palms. The leaves are stiff and have a very simple undivided leaf. In deep shade the leaves get dark green and almost black with a metallic sheen. Hence the name - **metallica**.

More growers are beginning to produce this plant. In the past it was typically found grown in 6 inch pots only. Now as more plants are produced you'll find it planted in 8 and 10 inch pots with 3 plants per pot.

Metallica is slow growing so you can expect to pay more than usual. That also means you'll be able to enjoy the plant in the same place for years.

### Remember This...

One good rule of thumb in purchasing plants - **Most of the plants that do really well indoors are slow growers**. Don't judge a plant based just upon price and height. Slow growers usually cost more and may not be as tall but are better over the long haul.



The normal height for **metallica** is 24 - 36 inches tall. They are very tolerant of low light conditions and work well when you need something different and upright.

They're pretty easy to care for... **metallica** does well with lighting that you'll find in most homes and offices. If the plant is placed in brighter light levels the leaves lighten to a grey-green color.

DO NOT allow **metallica** to sit in saucers full of water or never allow the soil to dry, this can lead to root rot. Overwatering will lead to leaf tips that turn yellow.

Wait until the soil has dried down about half the soil depth. When you water, thoroughly water the soil evenly making sure the soil and roots have all had a good drink.

Remember.... **DO NOT** let the plant sit in water!!!

Pest problems are hardly an issue with **metallica**. The wide leaves make it easy to wipe down and keep the foliage clean. The leaves are also rigid and thicker making it more difficult for insects to "feast".

Do not prune the **metallica** palm as you would other plants. It grows from a main stem, and the leaflets should be "tipped" or the leaf itself removed if any "clean up" is needed at all.

If you're looking for a low light palm that is also an accent plant check out the **Chamaedorea metallica** palm, just be careful not to over water.

This isn't a plant that you'll find in the normal Garden Center. You'll find it in nurseries or garden centers that carry a wide array of different indoor plants. Metallica is available... just ask your local nursery to order it from their plant wholesaler.

Remember that buying a big plant that's cheap doesn't mean you're receiving a good value, maybe you're buying problems. If you pass over those small plants you may be missing some plants that are tough as nails.

## Sansevieria

Plants as with fashion seem to come and go and come back again. Over the last few years the Sansevieria has started somewhat of a comeback. The "Snake plant" has been grown in the US foliage trade since the 1920's.

There are about 60 varieties but only about 15 varieties are grown commercially. Of these the two most popular are laurentii and zeylanica. They are also known by another name that isn't very "politically correct" the "mother-in-law's tongue".

Stock plants are grown in beds out in the full sun. One very unusual thing about the production of these plants is that stock growers actually mow the tops of the plants to force them to produce new growth. Snake's can be grown from leaf cuttings, clumps or rhizome cuttings.

These plants are very versatile in both size and in growing conditions. You can find Sansevieria used in small dish gardens all the way up into 14" containers about 42" inches in height.

They can handle full sun and look great on a patio during the spring and summer, but also can go inside into very low light. This plant can hang with the best of all low light plants.

The one climatic condition which sanseviera will not tolerate is temperatures below 45 degrees for extended periods. When the plants are damaged it can show up slowly sometimes over a 1- 4 week period.

### One Downside

Everything seems to have a downside. Sansevieria is no different. Their downside is weight. Because of their relationship to the succulent family they hold a lot of water.

As plants reach 10" and larger in pot size the weight goes up dramatically. I've seen 10" plants that weight 25 pounds or more.

If you're looking for a plant that:

- Is tough indoors
- Can be placed just about anywhere
- Takes up little space
- Goes a long time between watering
- Is a good plant to start with in the house



- Can start outside this spring and move inside

Take a look at the Sansevieria.

## **Zamioculcas zamiifolia – ZZ plant**

Zamioculcas is in the aroid family along with the spathiphyllum, philodendron, aglaonema and anthurium although you may not suspect it to be from its looks. It looks very similar in shape to the - Cycad - "Zamia Furfuracea - also known as the Cardboard Palm.

The plant has thick fleshy leaves and naturally glossy leaves. You may even think that the plant has been polished it is so shiny.

I grew this plant over 20 years ago as a "collector" plant and never gave it a thought as a potential indoor plant. About a year ago one of the more progressive growers started producing this plant.

While over at their nursery about 5 months ago I picked up one to see for myself if it was as tough as they said it was indoors. Well it is TOUGH.

Anyone that has been in my office will tell you that plants are not treated special. I learned that a long time ago from a successful grower that was always looking for plants with survival qualities. His motto was real simple. If a plant will survive under stress it will only do better with care.

Anyway, after bringing this plant back to my office, I set it in the corner with the paper sleeve that plants are shipped in - for a month. During that time it lost a few leaves and was never watered. Then I took it out of the sleeve, removed the bad leaves and let it sit for 2 weeks before I watered it for the first time.

The part that really impressed me was the fact that it didn't just sit there, but started to grow. Not spindly growth but good strong stalks and leaves.

I've kept the plant pushed over in the corner where it remains looking good and producing new growth regularly. No pest problems have shown up and I certainly haven't been caring for the plant.





While growing plants for over 25 years, seldom have I ever run across a plant that has performed so well indoors with so little care.

Zamioculcas zamiifolia has been nicknamed the "ZZ". It isn't a plant that you're going to find in your local chain store but the more upscale garden centers may carry it. If you ask for ZZ by name they can order it for you. It may be a little harder to find but well worth the effort.

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Well there you have it 5 "Can't Miss House Plants." There are other indoor plants which perform well, but these are pretty much at the top for toughness. To effectively care for your plants you need to take some time to learn about them and let them adapt to your own environment.

I want to thank you for downloading "Can't Miss House Plants" and taking the time to read through all the information.

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