Moving plants indoors for the winter takes time

With summer gardening drawing to a close, gardeners with potted plants on the patio need to prepare to bring the plants indoors for the winter season. To keep your plants from throwing the horticultural equivalent of a toddler tantrum and throwing their leaves on the floor, take the process slowly so the plants can adjust to their new environment.

It’s best to get the plants moved indoors before night temperatures get below 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Gardeners will likely see plant damage if plants are exposed to those temperatures for an extended time.

Don’t make the mistake of just plucking the pots from the patio and putting them in the corner of your living room. Plants need to acclimate to lower light levels. Start off by moving the plants into shaded spots in the landscape for about a week. This is an important step even if your home features good natural light. Even a sunroom doesn’t provide the same kind of natural light as being outdoors.

Be sure to trim off any dead or damaged leaves. Once the plants are moved inside permanently, cut back on water and fertilizer.

Although there are some garden bugs that are beneficial, you don’t necessarily want them in your house. Check over the plants and wash off any bugs with the hose. Homeowners definitely don’t want the plants serving as an Uber or a Lyft for garden bugs. Be sure to check between the pot and saucer for some sneaky bugs and insects. This is important because some of these pests can cause damage to plants kept in the home all the time. Aphids, mealy bugs and scales can move indoors undetected, and their population can explode.

Once indoors, placement is important. Keep plants away from vents, radiators and fireplaces. These areas cause rapid change in temperature and humidity. However, make sure the plants are getting enough humidity. Since humidity is typically lower indoors, especially with the heater running, it’s important to keep the plants humid. This can be done by spraying the plants with water or putting pebbles in a tray of water and setting plants directly on the pebbles.

While water and humidity are important to plant health, be careful to not overwater. Check the soil before watering and make sure it’s dry.