

Saving a Drowning Plant  
By Verna Berger

The plants look droopy and wilted; it must need water, right? Isn't that what most of us think? So, water is what this little plant gets, but the appearance doesn't change for the better; it actually looks worse. Now what? Chances are the plant wasn't too dry in the first place, instead it was too wet, and now it's drowning. Well, let's see if we can save this poor little thing. After all, it may be that special plant, not easily replaceable.

The first thing to do is remove the plant from the existing soil and determine if the problem is indeed too much moisture rather than the lack of it. If no little white hairy roots are visible, the plant is probably ready to expire. This condition may be caused not only by excessive watering, but also poor drainage or too compact a potting soil.

Take off as much of the now rotten soil as possible from the root ball without causing damage to the root system. If the pot has poor drainage, correct the condition, and if the type of soil was the problem, change to a difference composition.

Replace the plant in the same pot with new soil. **Do not** press the soil around the plant, and mist gently, just to give a little moisture.

Place the drowning victim in a completely shaded area where it will not receive any sun at all. It will however, require warmth and humidity. In our area, during the growing season, this isn't a problem. If you don't have a completely shaded area, be creative. Don't water for about a week.

No, don't panic as you keep your daily watch and notice the plant defoliating and resembling certain death. All the leaves will fall off and you will be left with dead looking sticks. However, have patience, if you were able to save your little treasure, you will soon begin to see the signs of new growth at each node.

The recovering patient should continue to be kept in a shaded area until successfully nursed back to health.

I highly recommend using a moisture meter to check daily on the amount of moisture at the root level. This is sometimes difficult to determine by looking at the top of the soil. When in the dry zone, give just small amounts of water, it's okay to gently mist the branches and new growth as it appears.

I sincerely hope you never have the occasion to need this article, but if you do; you have my sincerest wishes for complete recovery for your plant.

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