



I Have a HOUSE PLANT Too

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I Have a
HOUSE PLANT
Too!



Basics of care

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Getting to know: house plants

Do you like the scents, colours and variety of nature? Did you know that green is calming, just like being in the country? That's right: in the country your mind is calmer and relieves itself of tension and worries. No wonder, then, that people fill their homes with plants. Why not take a piece of nature home with you? We refer to plants that live in our homes as **house plants**. Most of these are exotic plants whose origin makes them used to conditions rather different from the ones where we live. So, in order for them to grow well, we must create an environment in which they feel at home.

Let's learn together how to do this.



This book will help you in your early days as a cultivator of plants, and beyond. In fact, it will continue to be of use to you when you are quite experienced.

It contains all you need to know, plus lots of tips. It will teach you what to notice, how to care for your plants from day to day, how to choose the right plant, and what to do if you get into difficulties. There is no catch-all guide to successful plant care. And not even following procedures to the letter will guarantee that your plants will grow as you wish them to. Caring for house plants requires a combination of knowledge, experience and empathy. In short, plants need to be monitored to ensure that they are reacting well to your care. But one thing is for sure: your perseverance with them will be rewarded.

Each yellow box contains basic information on a given topic.

A circle with a number **5** in it refers you to another page of this book, where you will find more, related information.

In this book we work with a limited number of plants. It doesn't matter at all if your house plant is not among our choice. Although there are a great many plant species, principles of care tend to be much the same.

This book is divided into three parts. In the first, you will learn about basic conditions in which plants should be kept. In the second, you will choose a plant from the encyclopaedia of house plants. In the third, you will learn about plant care throughout the year.

The encyclopaedia of house plants is easy to find thanks to the green marking on the pages.



Glossary

When reading this book and tending your plants, you will encounter various terms. Here you can find the most basic ones explained. If you can't remember what they mean, turn to this page for a reminder.

Cutting – piece cut from a plant (e.g. a leaf, branch or part of the stem) for placing in a glass of water or a moist substrate, where it will take root, after which it can be grown into a new plant.

Dew-drop moistening – type of watering by which we wet the surface of a house plant's leaves when they need to increase humidity. Applied with a sprayer.

Dormancy – period during which a plant's vital functions are slower, with the result that it grows very slowly or not at all. Tends to occur in late autumn or winter.

Drain – layer of pebbles or balls of expanded clay on the bottom of the pot, which drain excess water from the roots. A protection against overwatering.

Fertilizer – nutrients for plants, applied in the form of sticks or mixed with water. May be chemically produced or from natural sources.

Growing season – period during which conditions are favourable for plant growth. Usually occurs in spring and summer, when there's more light and heat, so that the plants grow faster and create new leaves.

House plant – plant tended at home, indoors. Most house plants are of exotic origin and have decorative flowers and/or leaves.

Humidity – concentration of water vapour in the air. Some plants require high humidity. We increase humidity by dew-drop moistening, showering or use of an air humidifier.

The greater the number of plants in an indoor space, the higher the humidity in that space. Dry air is a threat to plant health, especially in the heating season.

Location – place where a house plant is kept. Conditions should be suitable for its species, not least in terms of light intensity.

Substrate – soil mix in which a plant will thrive. The substrate provides it with nutrients and water retained from watering.

Succulent – plant whose stem and leaves store water, allowing it to survive long periods of drought. Its leaves and stem are thick and fleshy. Stonecrops and aloes are common house-plant succulents.

Summer care – keeping indoor plants outside, e.g. on a balcony or patio, in summer, so that they grow better and are more resistant in winter. We move them outside only when temperatures have stabilized and there is no danger of frost, in the second half of May at the earliest.

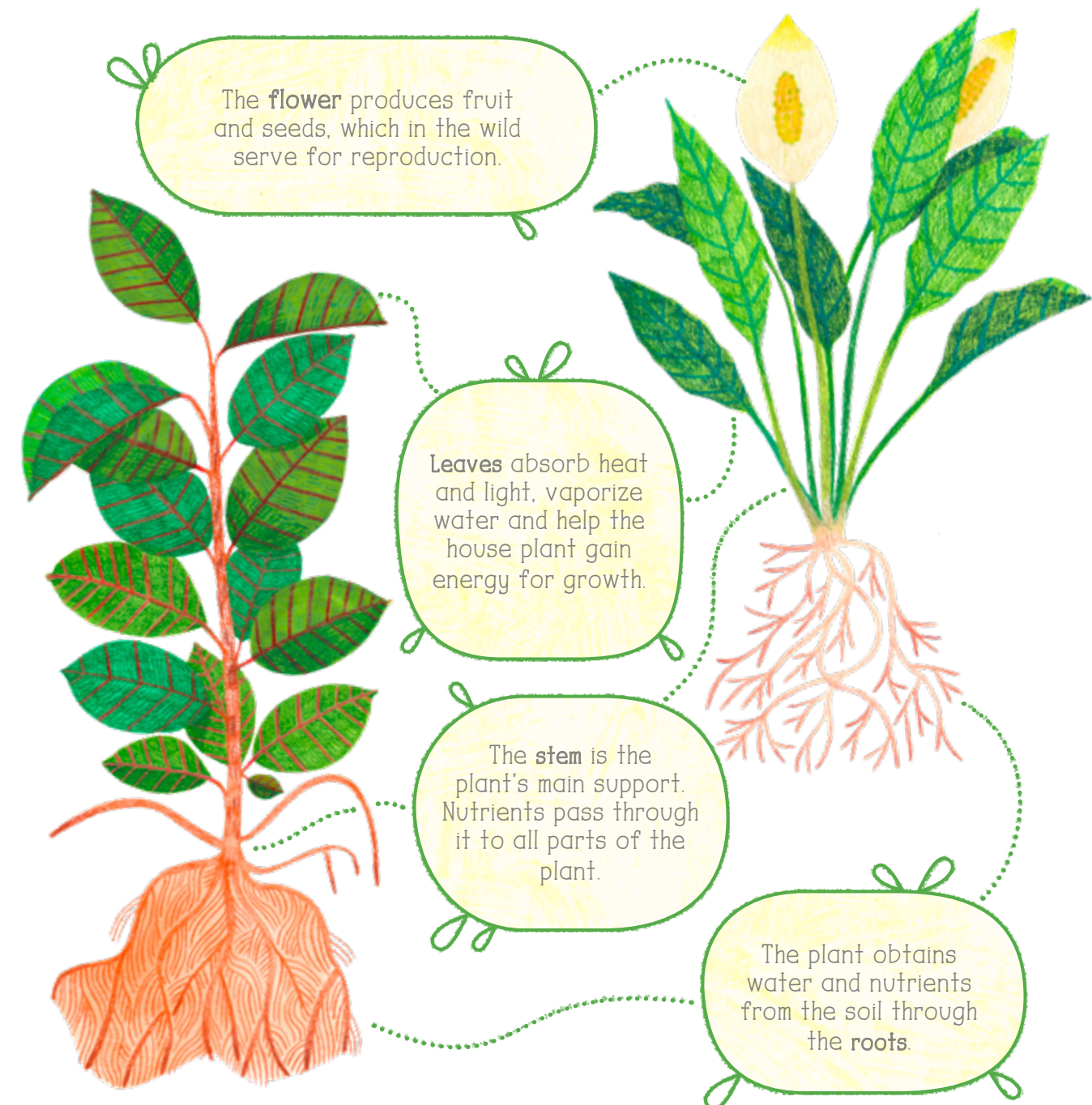
Watering – Plants should be watered in accordance with their needs. Tools for increasing plant moisture include a watering can, a shower, and a dew-drop moistener.

Winter care – In winter, we change how we care for indoor plants by moving them to cooler areas of the home (e.g. a hall or landing) and watering them less.

House plants up close

Like other plants, house plants are composed of three main parts: **roots**, **leaves**, and **stem**. In the wild, plants produce **flowers** and **fruit**; it is unusual for house plants to do so, as only certain species flower.

The three main plant parts vary in appearance, in terms of shape, texture and size. As the case may be, however, each has its special function, without which the plant would not survive.



My room without house plants

You may be wondering about the point of getting a house plant. Your room is nice and cosy without one, isn't it? Besides, plant care is a complicated matter, so why make more work for yourself? Isn't it better to play? But let's say you do decide to get a house plant. How would it make your room different?



My room with house plants

With house plants, your room suddenly becomes cosier still. As well as looking good, many house plants purify and humidify the air, making it easier for you to sleep and breathe. In short, you will feel a little as you do in the country – relaxed and contented. But if plant care is to become your hobby, you should know that it is habit-forming: you won't be satisfied with only one or two plants. Another benefit of this pastime is that it is fun and creative. Why not make the plants in your room into a small jungle, hang them from the ceiling, or use them to liven up a boring shelf or windowsill?



What you will need

Every keeper of house plants needs patience and determination, plus a few other things. These things include tools. It is enough to get some tools when the need for them arises, but you will need others from the start. All your needs will be met by a flower shop or garden centre, where you will be able to choose from many materials, sizes and designs. The main thing is, your tools should be the right ones for you and your plants, so making caring for your plants as easy as possible.

We choose a **plant** in line with our experience of plant care and conditions in our home

20 – 35

A **pot** gives the plant space in which to grow 13

A **tray** or **flowerpot cover** gives excess water a place to flow into 12

A **substrate** fills out the pot, providing the plant with support and nutrients 12

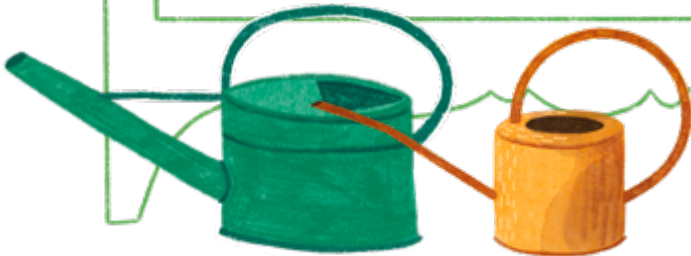
A **drain** diverts excess water away from the plant's roots 12

Fertilizer supplies the plant with the nutrients it needs 13

Without a **watering can**, we would struggle to water our plants 14



support sticks



watering cans



plant



fertilizer



substrate



pot

tray

string

drain

sprayer

flowerpot cover

seeds

gloves

cloth

knife

scissors

rake

trowel

We use a **cloth** to wipe dust from the leaves.

A **knife** and **scissors** are used to shape plants or remove old or damaged parts 44. Tools must be clean, to ensure against the spread of dirt, bacteria or pests. Special garden scissors or plant clippers are best.

We use a **sprayer** on plants that need dew, i.e. the leaves on their surface must be moist 15

Gloves make it easier to repot plants 42. They also protect the hands against dirt and injury.

A **trowel** and a **rake** make work with soil easier. Not only do they keep our hands clean, but they also place the soil exactly where it is needed.

String and **support sticks** help plants to grow as they should.

Soil and pots

For successful cultivation of a house plant, choosing the right pot and an appropriate substrate is essential. The plant takes nutrients from the substrate, while the pot provides space for its roots to grow. The plant's conditions should be as close as possible to those in which it lives in the wild. Pot size affects the amount of soil and water available to the plant, so determining how happy it will be.

Pot size and material are important: as they define the plant's living space, they have a great influence on its growth. It is not always the case that a bigger pot is better.

The size of the tray must correspond to that of the pot. It should be at least as broad as the pot's top edge.

Different plants thrive in different substrates, i.e. soil compositions.

When we don't know which soil to choose, we use a universal substrate for house plants.

A **flowerpot cover** is more than just a nice decoration; above all, it is a functioning tray for collection of excess water. The cover should not be too tight: there must be at least one centimetre between it and the pot.

Fertilizer nourishes plants. It comes in liquid, powder and stick form. When administering a dose, we always follow the instructions on the pack. Fertilizer is mostly applied in spring and summer.

A **tray** collects water that the soil in the pot does not have time to absorb after watering. We pour this excess water away. With some plants, we water only into the tray **15**.



A **substrate** fills out the pot, so creating a 'living space' for the plant from which it receives nutrients. Some house plants require a substrate of special composition; this can be bought ready-made or mixed at home. It is good to change the substrate regularly, because after a year or so it no longer contains so many nutrients and loses its ability to retain water.

The **pot** must have a hole in the bottom for outflow of excess water, and it must be the right size. If the pot is too small, the plant will lack space for growth. If it is too large, rooting will require a lot of energy, so slowing down growth.

We choose the **pot's material** depending on the type of plant and how we will water it. **Terracotta** lets in more water, so reducing the risk of overwatering and root rot. A **plastic** pot holds more water, making it better where we may sometimes forget to water the plant.

A **drain** is a layer at the bottom of the pot that ensures that excess water drains away, so protecting the roots from rot. We use one with all plants watered from the top **15**. Balls of expanded clay are a popular drain; pebbles, pieces of glass and a broken flowerpot can also be used as a drain.

Water and watering

For good care, it is essential to give plants the right amount of water at the right time. Good plant-watering is like alchemy – some plants need watering occasionally, but others require it practically every day. In addition, our spring and summer watering practices are very different from our winter ones. We water most plants into the pot from the top, but some require water in the tray only. For this reason, it is important to know your plants and the conditions that suit them. To claim something like ‘We must water the plants on Wednesdays’ is nonsense.

How often and how much we water our plants depends on how much light and heat **16** they have.

If by sticking a finger in the substrate we find the soil to be dry, it is time to water the plant.

Don't water your plants in the evening or when the sun is at its strongest.

Use settled water so that it is at room temperature.

Plants need more water in spring and summer than in autumn and winter.

For watering, it is best to use **settled water** of room temperature; ideally, this will be at least one day old. Cold or hot water might give a plant a temperature shock. Settled water also releases chlorine and lime salt, which are harmful to plants. So we should prepare water for our plants in advance, in special containers.

The **watering can** for your house plants should have a **long, thin funnel**, allowing you to reach the plant's stem as well as just the pot.



In spring and summer we can **shower** our plants with lukewarm water. As well as giving them a good wetting, it will clear their leaves of dust, so allowing them to breathe better. Showering is also good protection against pests **52**.



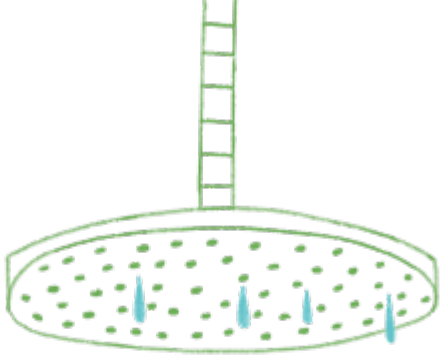
We water most house plants **into the pot from the top**. Excess water flows into the tray, from where we pour it away.



We water succulents and plants sensitive to stem- and leaf-rot **directly into the tray**; the plant will take the water from the tray itself; such plants must not have a drain in the pot, as this would prevent the water from reaching the plant.



Plants of tropical origin, which are used to high humidity, love to be **dew-drop moistened** with a sprayer. Their leaves should not be made so wet that the water drips from them.



watering can with long funnel

settled water

sprayer



Light and heat

As well as water, soil and air, every plant needs light and heat. Without them, it would cease to grow and start to wither. Needs for light vary from one plant to the next, however. For this reason, we can't put a house plant wherever we wish, or where we happen to have space. We must find the right spot for it, and in this regard light conditions are crucial. They are divided into four categories, dependent on light intensity: direct sunlight, diffuse light, partial shade, full shade. We position our plant in accordance with its specific needs. Sometimes we must work with a chosen location – e.g. by more intensive watering, or by ensuring that the plant is not in a draught or too close to a radiator. As no one place in the home offers the same conditions all year round, we should expect to move the plant from one place to another.

Partial shade is usually found away from windows, where there is little direct sunlight. It is also found near poorly lit windows (typically in a north-facing location).

We mostly find **direct light** by a window into which the sun shines for most of the day (typically in a south-facing location). Such a place is suitable for succulents and tough house plants with fleshy leaves.

Shade is a place where no direct light falls. Almost no plants thrive here.

We tend to find **diffuse light** by windows into which the sun shines with less intensity, or for part of the day only (typically in west- or east-facing locations). We also find it in places near windows where the plant can 'see the sky'. It's suitable for the most house plants.

Don't underestimate the importance of location. It determines how well our plant grows, and how to care for it.

When choosing a plant, consider the point of the compass towards which your room faces. Light intensity also depends on distance from the window and the floor you live on.

A change of location is often necessary before winter, when there is less light.

Don't move your plants too often: it is not good for them.

Don't place plants too close to radiators: they dislike dry air and changing temperatures.



polka dot begonia



prayer plant



string of hearts



palm



crassula



cactus



aloe vera



dwarf umbrella tree



ZZ plant



mother-in-law's tongue



fiddle-leaf fig



Chinese money plant



moss ball



Choosing the right house plant for you

Now you know what a plant needs to grow well, the crucial moment is approaching – you will soon be choosing your own. Before you make your choice, however, you should ask yourself a few questions.



What do I have to offer?

Think about the conditions and care you can offer a plant. Do you have enough space for it? Are the light and temperature in your room right for the plant you are considering? If you have a pet, you must be sure that it will not nibble at the plant, which could be dangerous for its health. When choosing a plant, you should think about how much time you are prepared to give. Some plants need more care than others.

What am I expecting from my house plant?

Do you want to fill your room with plants, or will one or two be enough for now? Do you fancy a really big one, or would you prefer one with leaves of interesting shape and colour? Although knowing what you want is important, you should bear in mind that the more plants you have, the more demands they will make on your time. Are you truly willing to give them the attention they need?

How experienced am I as a carer for plants?

Are you a beginner, or do you have some experience of caring for plants? If the former, you would do well to learn the basics of plant care on a plant that doesn't make many demands. If the latter, or if you are bold in your approach, why not try some more demanding species? Be aware that even the most experienced carer gets things wrong sometimes. It is important not to be discouraged by failures.

As there are hundreds of types of house plants, you have a lot to choose from! In the pages to come, you will get to know some of the basic, most popular species. So, welcome to our **encyclopaedia of house plants!**

In the entry for each plant you will find information on intensity of watering, most suitable location, demands of care, plus other practical advice and points of interest.

The encyclopaedia's yellow boxes provide information on:

How often should the plant be **fertilized**? In general, plants are fertilized throughout the growing season **39**. We do not fertilize plants when they are dormant (unless instructed otherwise).

How often should the plant be **transplanted**? A young plant should be moved every spring to a slightly larger pot. With full-grown plants, transplanting requirements vary. Unless you are instructed otherwise, you should do your transplanting at the beginning of the growing season **42**.

How do you get your plant to reproduce? Here, you will find detailed instructions on ways of **propagation** **46**.

Additional information for the plant's carer - on substrate composition, special care needs etc.

Intensity and frequency of watering



water a lot and often



water regularly and in moderation



water regularly, but less often and to a lesser extent

Ideal light intensity



direct light



diffuse light



partial shade



full shade

Demands of care



for experts = plants that place high demands on conditions and care



for advanced carers = plants that place moderate demands on conditions and care



for beginners = resilient plants that make low demands



Flowers



Unsuitable for pets: can cause health issues. Keep out of reach of small children.



Needs dew-drop moistening

Spathe lily

SPATIPHYLLUM

- The spathe lily is suitable for rooms where the air should be kept pure: it absorbs harmful substances and even some poisonous gases.
- It comes from the jungles of Central America, so it likes relatively high humidity. For this reason, when it is not in flower, use a dew-drop moistener on it, open its leaves with a damp cloth, or shower it.
- Be aware that it is toxic. A nibble at its leaves could give a pet tummy trouble or even poisoning. If juice from the leaves gets on your skin, you may get a nasty rash.
- From spring to autumn it produces white flowers reminiscent of arrow quivers.



Great looker
that purifies
the air

Fertilize 1x in 2 weeks.

Repot rarely, e.g. 1x in 3 years.

Propagate by division.

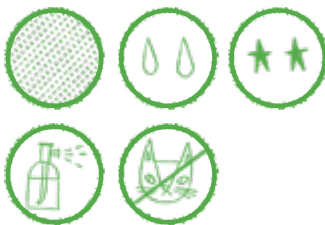
The substrate should always be moist, but there should be no standing water in the tray.



Fiddle-leaf fig

FICUS LYRATA

- The fiddle-leaf fig is easily identifiable by its violin- or lyre-shaped leaves. A thriving plant will grow to a height of up to 3 metres.
- The fiddle-leaf is one of many fig species. Also common, and easier to care for, are the benjamin fig (whose leaves are small) and the rubber fig (whose leaves are large and leathery).
- Figs are very popular house plants. They can be shaped, are easy to propagate, and when treated well will give pleasure for many years.
- They love dew-drop moistening and showering. Their substrate should be neither overwatered nor allowed to dry out, permeable, and the pot should have a drain.
- If you wish your fig to grow outwards, grasp the leaves at its sides to get it to gain in volume. Cuttings can be taken for propagation.



Fertilize 1x in 2-3 weeks.

Move to a slightly larger pot every 2 years.

Propagate by stem or top cuttings.

A draught, a fall in temperature or a change of location can lead to leaf fall.

It will grow
to be taller
than you.

Monstera

MONSTERA DELICIOSA

- The tropical monstera is a big hit among house plants. It is characterized by leaves with holes in the blade. These leaves can be as large as plates. The plant can be over 2 metres tall.
- There are several species of monstera. You could start with a smaller one before moving on to one of truly monstrous proportions.
- Runners that grow from the stem are known as aerial roots. The plant absorbs moisture and nutrients from the air. Aerial roots cling to a support as they grow upwards, so put a stick in the pot for them to climb.
- If a monstera doesn't get enough light, its leaves will not acquire their characteristic holes.
- In the wild, it produces white flowers. As a house plant, it flowers in rare cases only.

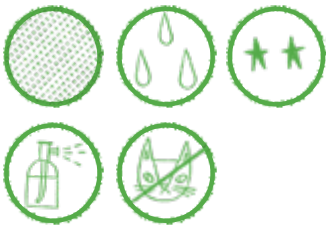


Fertilize 1x in 2 weeks.

Do not transplant until the pot is filled with roots.

Propagate by a cutting from which an aerial root is growing.

It likes dew-drop moistening and showering, and it will benefit from being wiped by a cloth.



Your own bit of jungle in the living room



String of hearts

CEROPEGIA WOODII

- This plant's overhanging branches filled with heart-shaped leaves are most striking when hung by a window in a sunny place.
- It thrives in similar conditions to those favoured by succulents: it likes dry air, and it dislikes moisture. It requires plenty of light. It should be watered only when the substrate is drying.
- It produces tuberos purple flowers in summer, when we water it more than usual.
- A string of hearts is unlikely to be attacked by pests. If healthy, it is highly resistant to them.

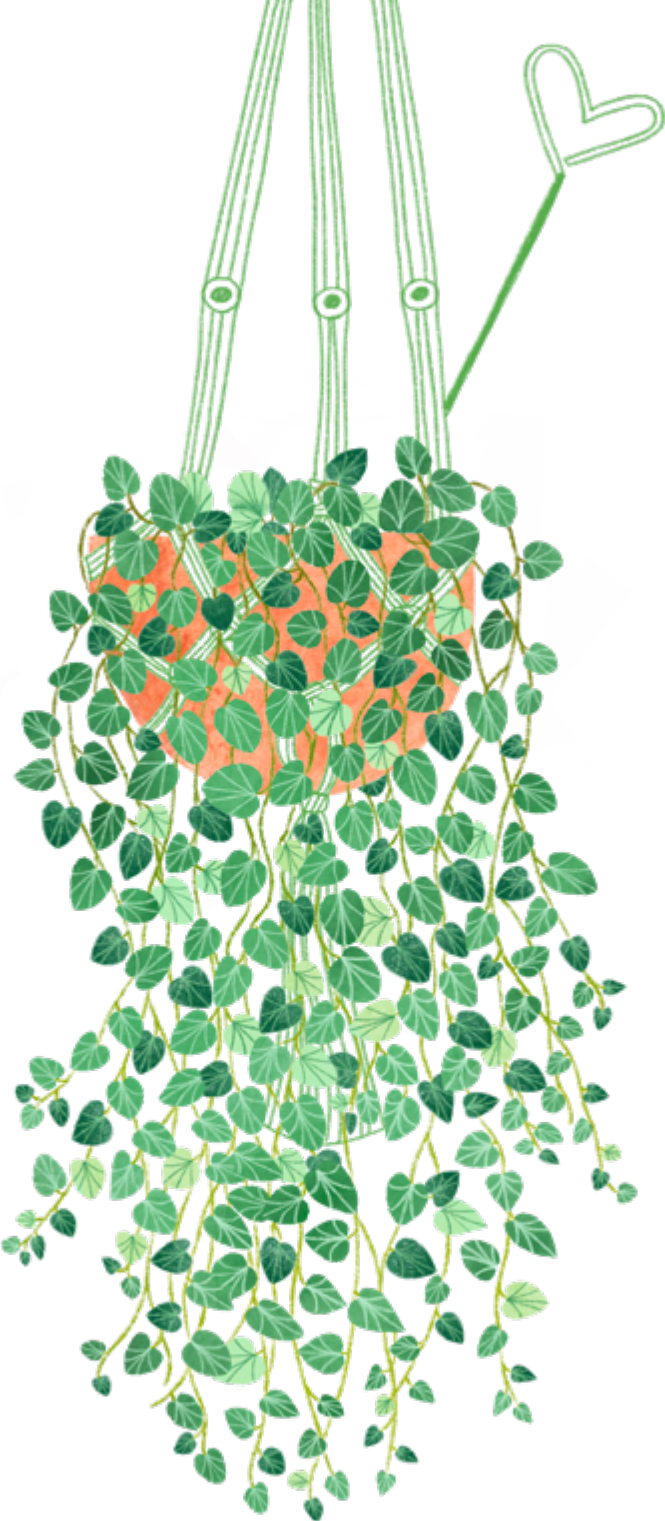
A plant-pot full of hearts

Fertilize 1x per month.

Repot every 2-3 years.

Propagate by taking cuttings or tubers.

It thrives in a substrate for cacti.



False shamrock

OXALIS TRIANGULARIS

- The false shamrock is an undemanding house plant with unusual purple colouring. It reacts to light: in day-time, its leaves are spread, while at night they close to store energy for growth.
- It is watered from the bottom into a tray, but only when its substrate has dried out. It reacts badly to overwatering.
- Some other species of Oxalis have green colouring and remind us of the four-leaf clover. There is no need to moisten the leaves; dust can be showered away.



House plant
with butterfly
wings



Fertilize 1x in 2 weeks.

Repot in spring, but only in case of need.

Propagate by division or tubers.

Even when almost dried-out, it will sprout new leaves after watering.

Chinese money plant

PILEA PEPEROMIODES

- The Chinese money plant is a very attractive and popular house plant. It is notable for its splendid, unusual, round leaves.
- As its stem leans towards the sun, it should be turned from time to time so that it remains straight and doesn't lose its shape.
- A thriving Chinese money plant will produce a small 'baby' next to the mother plant. This can be cut away and grown into a new plant.
- Water only when the surface of the substrate is dry.
- If its water is too hard, the undersides of its leaves develop white spots. When this occurs, the plant should be watered with boiled water.
- Small, white-yellow flowers appear in exceptional cases.
- From China, it is said to bring wealth.



Grow yourself
some money

Fertilize 1x in 2 weeks.

Repot in spring, but only in case of need.

Propagate by offsets ('babies') or stem cuttings.

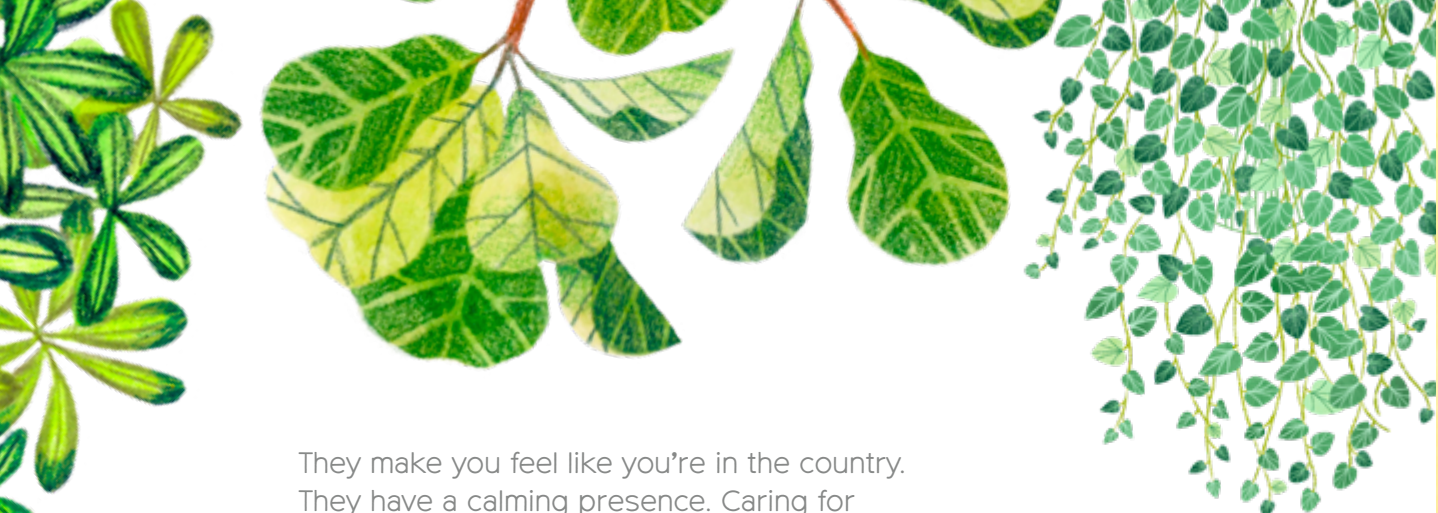
Leaves will curl in strong light or excessive heat.





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They make you feel like you're in the country. They have a calming presence. Caring for them can be a lifelong hobby. We're talking about house plants, of course! This book will tell you all you need to know for your house plants to thrive. You will learn to identify and care for common plants and about basic procedures that make repotting easy. But what if you run into problems? Well, our fun encyclopaedia has plenty of solutions! So, open this book and take your first steps in the world of house plants!

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