



Why we love plants

This book is the product of a cross-country plant friendship. A few years ago, we began independently documenting our daily plant musings with photographs on Instagram. We captured everything from how to drill a drainage hole in a thrifted coffee mug to the new leaf emerging on a *Monstera deliciosa*. We knew each other at first only as our Instagram usernames @cleverbloom (Erin) and @plantingpink (Morgan). We sealed our online friendship by trading plant cuttings in the mail. From Florida, Morgan sent a *Pilea peperomioides* to Erin. From Oregon, Erin returned the favor with a Chain of Hearts (*Ceropegia woodii*). Despite being about as far away from each other as we could be in the contiguous United States, our shared love for greenery grew. Eventually, that bond inspired us to create the online community House Plant Club, where people around the world share their plants with each other using the hashtag #houseplantclub.

Through House Plant Club, we have answered thousands of questions about plant care and identification, and it is in that vein that we decided to write this book. We believe raising plants can be an easy and rewarding hobby. Whether you are a seasoned green thumb with hundreds of houseplants or a newbie succulent lover with a thing for *Echeverias*, there's something in this book for you. We've filled it with our best tips and tricks, our very favorite plants, and some fun projects to try along the way. And, just as we were before this book, we're only a DM away over on Instagram if you get stuck trying to decide whether you brought home a *Philodendron* or *Epipremnum*.

While we've been actively sharing our plant passions online for only the past few years, we've both been "plant people" for decades and inherited that trait from the plant people who came before us. Neither of us is a botanist or biologist, but we know a thing or two about how to raise a houseplant and we've designed this book to walk you through how to do it too. We believe a house comes to life when you bring plants into it. Whether you want a few succulents on a windowsill or a bathroom full of *Begonias*, we will help you source, nurture, and propagate your plants so that they will love you back.

Erin and Morgan

Consider your space before you shop

To set yourself up for success, consider your space before bringing a plant into it. It's heartbreaking to purchase the perfect plant only to bring it home and watch it waste away because it's not in an ideal environment.

Lighting

Evaluate your indoor lighting situation by determining which direction the available sunlight comes from. Also, consider light obstructions such as window treatments, houses, tall buildings, or fences. Knowing when your space is brightest and shadiest, as well as how far back into a room the sunlight reaches, will guide you in determining where to place your plants.

We live 3,000 miles apart from each other and we often talk about the weather and sunlight differences between Portland, Oregon, and Tampa, Florida. Depending on the season and where you live, different parts of the year can bring more or less intense sunlight. This will vary geographically, but it is another thing to consider when deciding where you can put plants in your home. In Florida, the winter sun shines directly into south-facing windows. Morgan moves her plants several feet farther away from the window to avoid the intense heat and direct rays. Erin's husband, Tim, made a wooden shelf for her hanging plants and it occupies a west-facing window that gets good light from the afternoon and evening sun.



East- and north-facing windows get more diffused sunlight so are typically best for low-light plants. The hospitable zone for these windows is smaller because less light comes in and spreads through the space. Because of this, you may need to use the windowsill, or a plant stand directly next to the window, to provide your plant with enough light. Succulents and cacti probably won't thrive in these spaces, but many plants can and will, including certain ivies, ferns, and snake plants.

Creating the ideal conditions

Use what you know about your space to select houseplants that will thrive in your conditions. If you don't have a lot of room, a plant that has a big footprint, like a *Monstera deliciosa*, might not be for you, but another plant in the same family, such as *Monstera adansonii*, can give you the same tropical vibe while remaining smaller. Succulents and cacti will put up with dry air, while tropical plants typically want things on the humid side. This isn't to say you can't keep a *Begonia* alive if you live in a dry place (because you may be able to supplement with a humidifier!), but if you can mimic a plant's natural environment it will be happier and healthier in the long run.

MONSTERA DELICIOSA

Propagation

Propagation is the act of creating a new plant from an existing one. It is a great way to multiply your collection and share plants with friends. There are many ways to propagate, but, with houseplants, the most common method is by rooting leaf or stem cuttings in water. Water propagation provides constant moisture that promotes root growth. Taking cuttings (also sometimes called clippings or starts) is a simple process, and most plants start to root within weeks. Not all plants can be rooted in water, but we've included a list of our favorites below.

While some people prefer to place their cuttings in soil immediately, it can be fun watching the roots form, and grow, in glass and water. Plants rooting in water make for great photographs, and the trend has caught on in home decor as well. Vintage glass jars, bud vases, and glass test-tubes can be made into propagation stations.



TRADESCANTIA FLUMINENSIS VARIEGATA
 HOYA OBOVATA
 SCINDAPSUS PICTUS
 EPIPREMNUM AUREUM
 MONSTERA SILTEPECANA
 TRADESCANTIA FLUMINENSIS "TRICOLOR"

Our Favorite Plants to Root in Water

- *Pilea peperomioides*
- *Monstera adansonii* and *M. deliciosa*
- *Epipremnum aureum*
- *Tradescantia zebrina* and *T. tricolor*
- *Philodendron* species
- *Hoya*
- *Sansevieria*

TRADESCANTIA FLUMINENSIS "TRICOLOR"





MAMMILLARIA RUESTII

Steps

1. Prepare your workspace by laying down newspaper or plastic sheeting. Cleaning up afterward will be much easier. Before removing a plant from its current container, gently massage the root area or tap it on a hard surface to loosen things up. Lightly pull on the main portion of the plant and slowly wiggle it from side to side until the plant is out safely. Use your hands to comb through the roots and loosen up the soil. Set the plant aside.

2. Fill the bottom 2 to 3 inches of the new pot with fresh soil. Next, place the plant inside the pot and continue to fill with soil around the edges. To avoid air pockets, pack the soil down lightly using your fingers. Now is the time to add top dressings, such as rocks or gravel, which can be aesthetically pleasing but also help with water retention. Lastly, water freshly potted plants thoroughly after repotting.



Potting up

Moving a plant you've had for a while into a larger pot is often called 'potting up'. In general, plants will exhibit clear signs of needing to be potted up, including:

- Exposed roots on top of the pot or poking out of the drainage hole
- Coiled roots filling a pot
- A plant in the same pot for a year or more
- Stunted growth on an otherwise healthy plant

Follow the steps for Repotting if you decide to pot up your plant to give it more room to grow. However, it may be the case that your plant does not need a bigger pot, but it would still benefit from fresh soil to restore nutrients. Gently remove the top inch or two of soil, mix with new soil, and replace, watering thoroughly.

MARANTA LEUCONEURA
SYNGONIUM PODOPHYLLUM





OUR
FAVORITE
PLANTS
AND HOW TO
CARE FOR
THEM

Tradescantia tricolor

***Tradescantia tricolor* is just as easy to care for as its more popular relative in the Wandering Jew family, *Tradescantia zebrina*. While *T. zebrina* sports purple leaves with silver and green markings, *T. tricolor* features leaves that are green, pink, and cream. Considered to be invasive species in many places where they grow in the wild, *Tradescantia tricolor* are hardy and fast-growing when kept as houseplants. In fact, they grow so quickly that they often become long and "leggy." Long, trailing stems can be snipped off to promote bushier growth for a more compact look.**

Water

Not a particularly thirsty plant, *Tradescantia tricolor* will put up with a bit of neglect. The more sunlight it receives, the more water it will need. *Tradescantia tricolor* leaves stand up straight and orient toward the light when healthy. They'll begin to point downward and droop when it's time to top up with water.

Light

Variegated plants with lighter-colored leaves often require more light than their darker counterparts and *Tradescantia tricolor* is no exception. This plant thrives in very bright light and can withstand direct sun through a window for a few hours a day. Adjust the watering schedule accordingly.

Soil

Standard houseplant mix is perfect for this unfussy plant. No amendments necessary.

Fertilizer

One or two fertilizer applications a year should be plenty for such an easy-going plant. *Tradescantia tricolor* plants grow so quickly on their own, they don't need much encouragement.

Propagation

As *Tradescantia tricolor* plants grow so fast, they can quickly become large and unruly. Snip off long stems, remove the lowest leaves, and place in water. Roots form on *Tradescantia tricolor* cuttings quicker than on any other plant we've propagated, sometimes within just two days! They are also quick to fade in water, so, once the roots reach 1 inch, transfer back to potting mix and watch the cycle begin all over again.



Cacti

As houseplants, cacti provide great architectural detail. Some, such as *Cereus*, are tall and columnar, some are squat and round, like *Mammillaria*, and others are wide and branched, like *Opuntia*. Their hairs, hooks, spikes, and spines give them a defensive texture that you'll want to avoid, lest you get poked. If kept in the right conditions, some indoor cacti will bloom beautifully in the spring, which can be a rewarding surprise after a winter of neglect.



Water

Like succulents, cacti require winter rest periods when you can virtually ignore them. Water only once or twice a month, just enough that they won't shrivel; there is no need for overly thorough watering during this time. Increase water in spring as the weather warms. During the active growing period, cacti can be watered similarly to other indoor plants. Once the top inch or so of soil has dried out, water thoroughly until the excess comes out of the drainage hole.

Light

Cacti should be kept year-round in the brightest light possible, with direct sunlight if available. South-facing windows will provide the best light. West-facing windows may suffice depending on your location, but north- and east-facing windows should be avoided.

Soil

Use fast-draining soil that won't hold on to moisture. Amend standard houseplant soil with perlite or similar granules, or use commercially available soil specially formulated for succulents and cacti. Cacti do not need large containers in order to thrive.

Fertilizer

Treat like succulents. Dilute standard houseplant fertilizer and scale back recommended dosage by half. Do not fertilize during the winter rest period.

Propagation

Thick gloves are recommended whenever handling cacti. Propagate by taking stem cuttings or by removing branches or offsets. All cuttings should be allowed to dry out for a few days before placing in soil to form roots.

A top-down view of four cacti in teal and yellow pots. The cacti are of different shapes and sizes, some with spines and some with small flowers. They are surrounded by a scattering of small, light-colored pebbles.

MAMMILLARIA RUESTII
FEROCACTUS EMORYI
MAMMILLARIA SPINOSISSIMA
MAMMILLARIA SCHIEDEANA

Pegboard

Perfect for small spaces, pegboards keep plants organized and out of reach of pets and children. You can showcase small plants vertically and style them in many different ways. Pegboards can be found online or at your local home-improvement store. They come in different materials including metal, plastic, and fiberboard. Here, we have used fiberboard, which can be purchased in either a natural color or white. They are easily customizable: paint the board any color you like and use the different accessories available to create the perfect look for your home.



Before you begin

The wall frame can be any size you choose, as long as it's not bigger than the pegboard you have. The pegboard will be cut to the same size as the glass in the frame. The glass will be discarded, or you can keep it for some other use. Your pegboard should be big enough for the type of accessories and plants you're using; we suggest 16 x 20 inches or larger. If you plan on painting your pegboard, let the paint dry for at least 24 hours before completing the rest of the project.

Supplies

- Wall picture frame with closure tabs (the metal tabs that close over the back)
- Pegboard
- Pencil
- Handsaw
- Nails
- Pegboard hooks, pegs, and hangers
- Plants (small pots, mounts, cuttings in glass jars, Air Plants, etc.)

Steps

1. Remove all glass and backing from the frame and set aside.
2. Carefully take the glass and set it on top of the pegboard, lining up the holes vertically and horizontally. Outline the glass with a pencil to create the cutting line.
3. Cut the pegboard along the lines with the handsaw and insert the pegboard into the frame. Secure with the frame tabs and hang the framed pegboard on the wall with nails.
4. Attach hooks to the pegboard and start decorating with plants. Pegboard baskets are the perfect place to house small potted plants. Mounted plants will hang nicely on

small hooks. Add finishing touches such as botanical artwork or pressed flowers to your pegboard plant display for a personal touch.

Frameless pegboard option

Another option for your pegboard is to forego the frame. You can hang just the pegboard on the wall with one drywall screw through each corner. Use a nut between the wall and the pegboard to create enough space for the hooks behind the pegboard.

HOYA OBOVATA
TILLANDSIA
PHILODENDRON HEDERACEUM "BRASIL"
TRADESCANTIA FLUMINENSIS "TRICOLOR"



Hanging plants



Don't limit yourself to windowsills and tabletops: another way to display plants is by hanging them. Plant hangers come in many styles, including beaded, fringed, and tie-dyed, or simple knotted macramé. Plant hangers can be used against a wall or hung directly from the ceiling, depending on your available space and light.

Great options for hanging plants

- *Scindapsus pictus*
- *Epipremnum aureum*
- *Peperomia prostrata*
- *Ceropegia woodii*
- *Chlorophytum comosum*
- *Philodendron hederaceum*
- *Rhipsalis*
- *Hoya*

