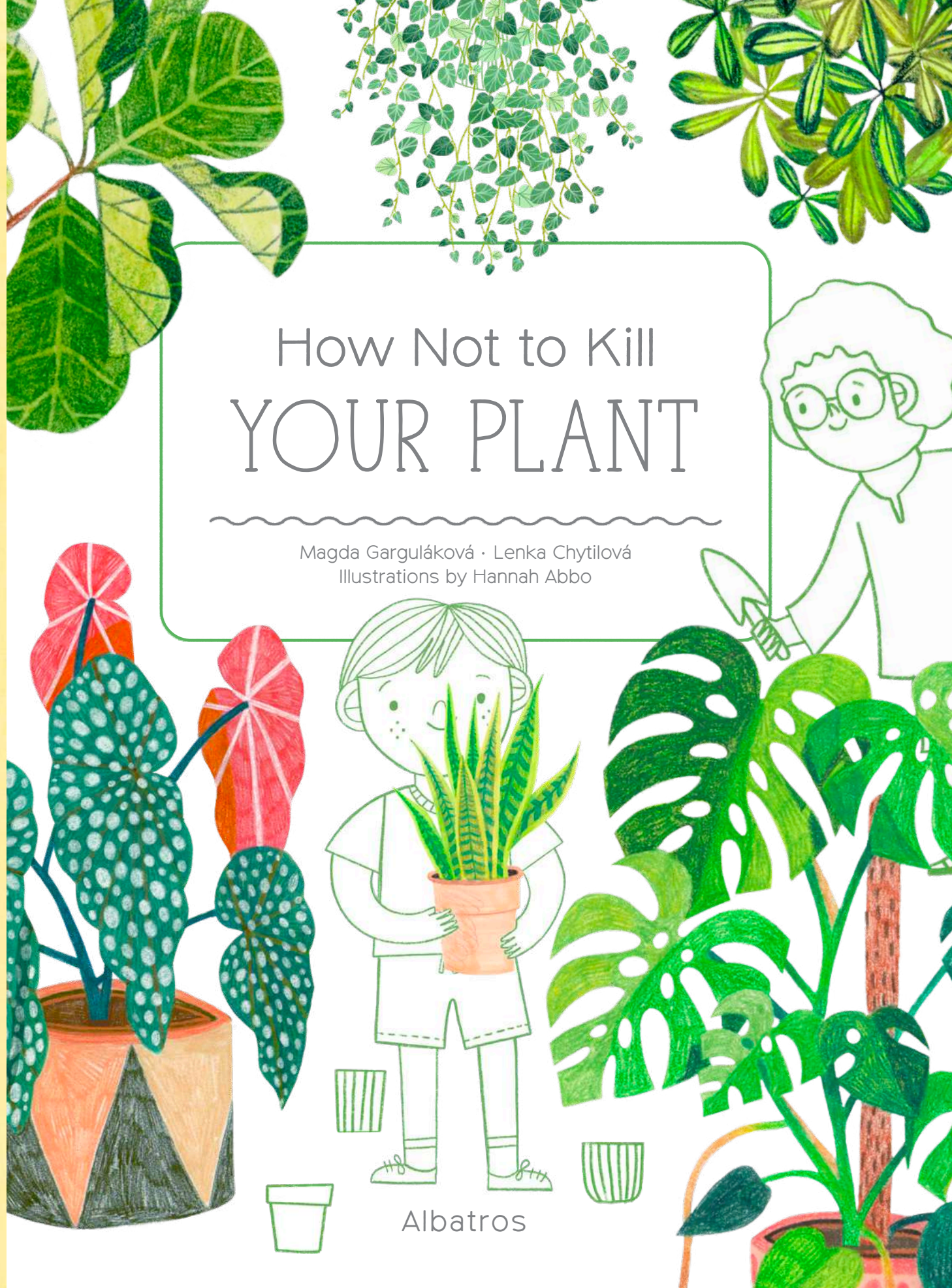


# How Not to Kill YOUR PLANT

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Illustrations by Hannah Abbo



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# How Not to Kill YOUR PLANT



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# Getting to know: houseplants

Do you like the scents, colors, and variety of nature? Did you know that green is calming, just like being in the countryside? 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 bring a piece of nature home with you? We refer to plants that live in our homes as **houseplants**. 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 where they feel at home.

Let's learn how to do this together.



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 extra 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 catchall 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 houseplants 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.

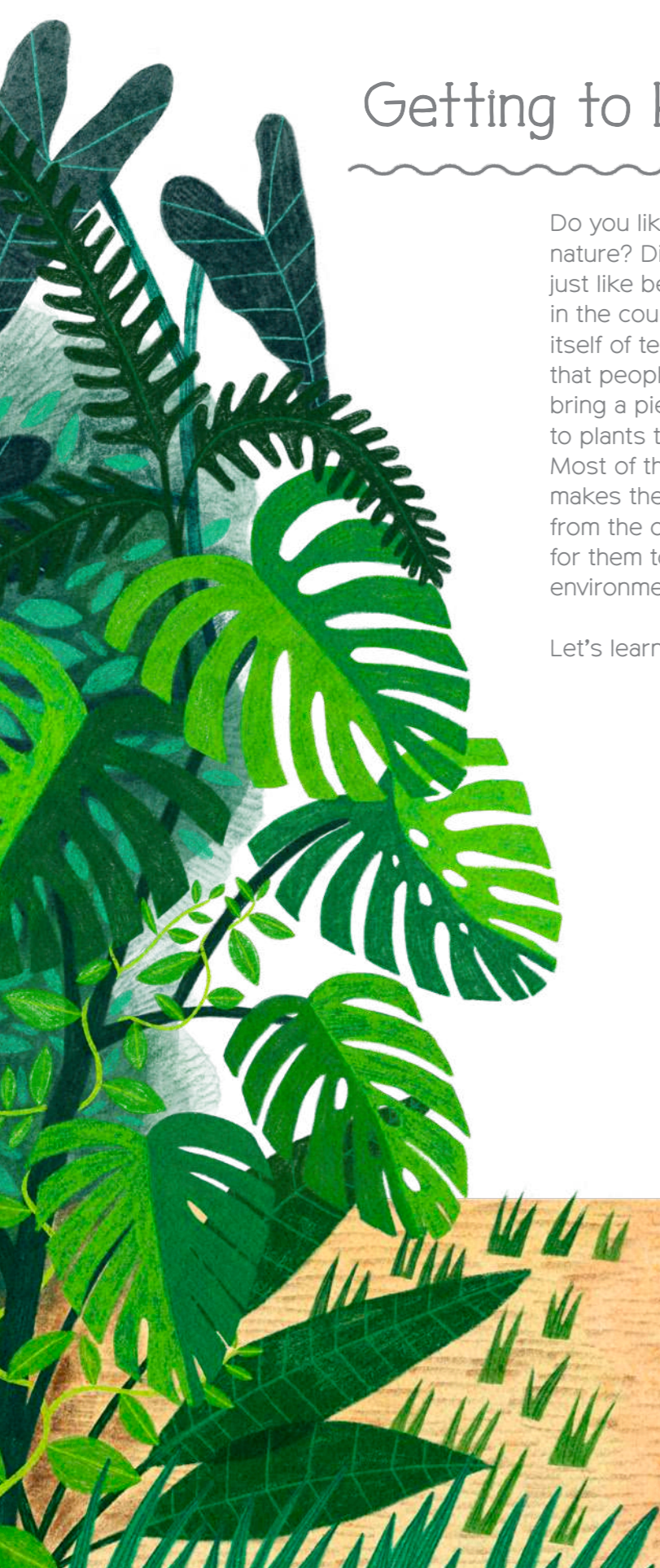
Each yellow box contains basic information on a given topic.

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 houseplant is not among our choices. Although there are many plant species, principles of care tend to be much the same for each of them.

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

The encyclopedia of houseplants is easy to find, thanks to the green borders on the pages of that section.



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

**Dew-drop moistening** – a type of watering by which we wet the surface of a houseplant'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** – a layer of pebbles or balls of expanded clay at the bottom of the pot, which drains 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 come from natural sources.

**Growing season** – period during which conditions are favorable 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.

**Houseplant** – a plant tended at home, indoors. Most houseplants are of exotic origin and have decorative flowers and/or leaves.

**Humidity** – concentration of water vapor in the air. Some plants require high humidity. We increase humidity by dewdrop

moistening, showering, or the 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 warm season.

**Location** – place where a houseplant 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** – a 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 houseplant succulents.

**Summer care** – keeping indoor plants outside (e.g., on a balcony or patio) in summertime so that they grow better and are more resistant in wintertime. 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.

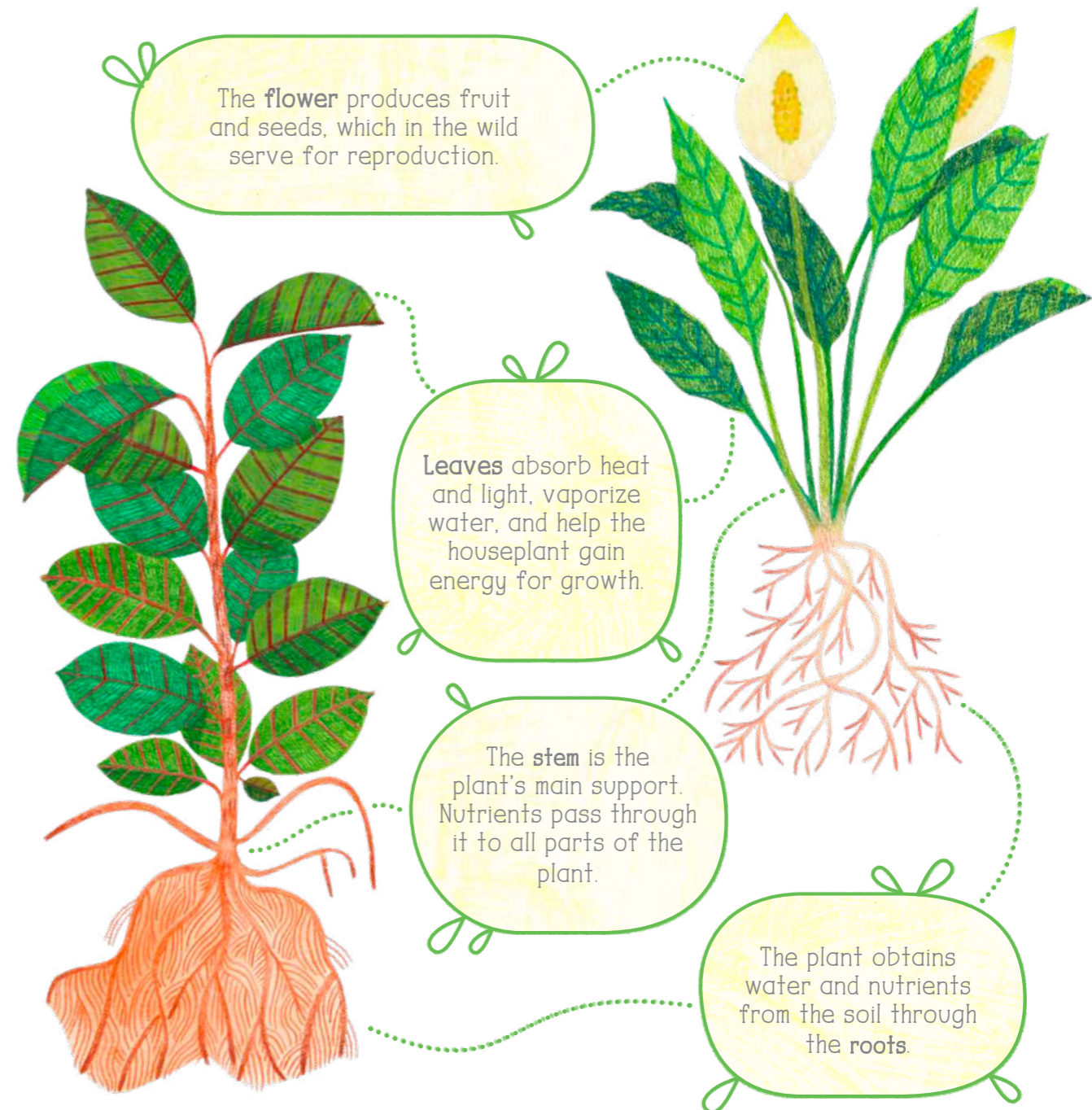
**Watering** – giving plants water in accordance with their needs. Tools for increasing plant moisture include a watering can, a shower, and a dew-drop moistener.

**Winter care** – caring for indoor plants in wintertime by moving them to cooler areas of the home (e.g., a hall or landing) and watering them less.

# Houseplants up close

Like other plants, houseplants are composed of three main parts: **roots**, **leaves**, and **stem**. In the wild, plants produce flowers and fruit; it is unusual for houseplants 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 houseplants

You may be wondering about the point of getting a houseplant. Your room is nice and cozy 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 houseplant. How will it make your room different?



# My room with houseplants

With houseplants, your room suddenly becomes even cozier. As well as looking good, many houseplants purify and humidify the air, making it easier for you to sleep and breathe. In short, you will feel a little like you do in the countryside—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 houseplants needs patience and determination, plus a few other things. These things include tools. It is OK to get some tools when the need arises, but you will need others from the start. All your needs will be met by a flower shop or garden center, where you can choose from many materials, sizes, and designs. The main thing is, your tools should be the right ones for you and your plants, 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 to grow 13

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

The material in which a plant lives and grows (called the **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

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 safeguard 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, since 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.







**For more info, check out the following websites:**

The Houseplant Guru  
([thehouseplantguru.com](http://thehouseplantguru.com))

Invincible Houseplants  
([invinciblehouseplants.com](http://invinciblehouseplants.com))

Our House Plants  
([www.ourhouseplants.com/](http://www.ourhouseplants.com/))

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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. What're we talking about? Why, houseplants of course! This book will tell you all you need to know for your houseplants to thrive. You will learn to identify and care for common plants and learn about basic procedures that make repotting easy. But what if you run into problems? Well, our fun encyclopedia has plenty of solutions! So, open this book and take your first steps in the world of houseplants!



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