

Nothing makes you feel closer to nature than plants. And when you reside in a high-rise apartment or have a tiny yard, tending lots of plants may be about as close to nature as you'll get. Think of plants as vital, growing individuals; they'll strengthen your ties with the out-of-doors and give you pleasure--no matter where you live. As you get to know different plant species, you'll find diversity--and be endlessly fascinated. Quiet and unobtrusive, plants still manage to establish a relationship with their owners--care for a plant, watch it respond, and you'll understand.

Houseplants need help if they're to remain healthy and thriving. They depend on you for water, food, soil, and placement in proper light. But plants are remarkably adaptable. They're amazingly tough and resilient; almost any plant will break so-called rules when given just a few of their favored conditions. Kitchens and bathrooms, for example, with their high degree of humidity, form natural havens for many plants. Give your leafy beauties their other "must have"--lots of light--and they'll reward you with thriving foliage and bountiful bloom.

Trim a window with plants hung at different levels and treat yourself to a living, green drapery; you'll also please your sun-loving plants. But don't despair if you don't have good natural light available, or if you've run out of places close to window areas. With grow-lights widely available and simple to install, there's no reason why you can't garden in any room of the house.

Don't hesitate to try new kinds of plants: cactus, bromeliads, ferns, or palms, for example. You'll be delighted to learn that some are as easy to grow as your old favorites.