

Transcript of Indoor Plant Care with Jullie Dorgan

Meirion - Hi there I'm Meirion from the Community Wellbeing team, we're here today doing a Webinar about indoor plant care. We've got Julie Dorgan here, she's going to give us a taster session of how her experience of indoor plant care and her knowledge about caring for plants has really helped her Wellbeing.

So how did you start getting enthusiastic in indoor gardening and why do you think it's a growing trend at the moment Jullie?

Jullie – Ok, Bore da, hello everybody, so yes, good question, I first got into planting and gardening through my grandparents. They were in the 2nd World war and there was an encouragement of growing your own food, growing your own vegetables etc. so when I was a little girl, Post war of course, I used to go into the garden with them and it was a beautiful thing, It's always stayed with me. There's nothing like picking your own vegetables from the garden. It rubbed off on my father and so we had a lovely bonding father and daughter, before going to school, picking the vegetables out the garden, tomatoes out the green houses.

Smells, those days of honeysuckle and the roses, that in those days it seemed the flowers smelt beautiful, and I think those smells are really important. Sometimes a sensory things take you to a memory, so that was a beautiful thing.

My dad went on to win Wales in Bloom two consecutive years, for care homes in North Wales.

Then I started growing my own vegetables, my own herbs, went on to an herbal course, within that me and my daughter and I went on TV on S4C. A welsh herbal, David Bellamy, it was then, bless him, and so that was lovely and interesting.

Then I went to do some tutorials on herbal and the wellbeing of herbs.

That answers that question,

and

Also, why I think it's a growing trend at the moment - I think especially since lockdown, people are restricted to be outside and sometimes people don't

have gardens. This thing about bringing the outside in is really prevalent at the moment.

I've lost you audio. You've unmuted

Meirion- I'm sorry I'm playing with too many things, have you got any tips for buying any house plants, if you're a beginner, where do you buy them, what to look out for, if you've been given any plants as a gift and in bringing them into the house have you got any tips or any strategies you've got?

Jullie – It's a great question, what I like to think you're sourcing for plants rather than maybe just shopping, it comes down to lots of different categories. If you're enthusiastic about plants or want to start bringing plants into your home, there are various places you can obtain these, the best places for these and especially in North Wales, we're lucky to have lovely garden nurseries, garden centres, and they make lovely...when we can go out, lovely family days out, as well and so you can go outside, and look at all the beautiful, the beautiful visual, and the smells etc. and the textures. That's quite a nice experience when you do go shopping for plants as well. And also those places will have gardeners at hand, so if you're not sure about certain species of a plant, or the care of it they will generally help you.

There are various places, supermarkets, you can get them from, little florist's boutique shops and online as well, especially since the lockdown people have been getting them online. Sometimes that can be a bit hit and miss, because they come crumpled in the post and you don't always know, it's better to see a plant, really, it's like choosing shoes.

Also there are social media sites as well, where you can swap plants, there's a whole plant community, indoor plants I mean now, so you can swap plants with each other as well.

The more you get into it, the more you will find out about these things, and if your friends gift you a plant as well, or family, it's really good to find out about these things, rather than bringing it into your home putting it into the wrong light and in a few weeks, months it's dead.

Meirion – I suppose if you're sharing a plant, you're also share information as well at the same time, won't you, "this is the best thing I've done with this

plant". Someone else will have another viewpoint you will be sharing experience and knowledge, as well won't you, and would that be fair?

Jullie - Yeah, yeah

Meirion – That sounds really interesting I didn't know about the sharing plants, alright,

What about, when you do get the plant, what kind of things do we need to do, what kind of things to look after the plants, what kind thigs ... of watering, light, compost, pests, what kind of tips have you got for those?

Jullie – Ok, when you ... I think even before you actually buy the plants, you need to kind of do a check on the light you have in your house. The requirements for that, There are certain tropical plants, I'll show you my display, I'm bit of a jungle here, I don't always have all my plants here, I just did this for this purpose of showing the various species etc. so just if you're going to get a tropical plant and you live in a little cottage or where the windows are smaller, maybe you need to rethink that, or buy grow lights as well, grow lights.

Meirion – have they got UV in them or..?

Jullie – There's LED ones and various ones with different prices, and you can buy these online from specialist stores, so you want to get little tools, I've got here a trowel, secateurs, watering can, maybe a mister, this is my little water gauge stick, that you put in the compost, it will tell you if your plant needs water or not. You can also get these that show you about the humidity and the light. You can get various ones of those.

So I would also, with some of the tropical plants, they need a lot more care than the succulents. If you do go away a lot, you need to think about that, some of the plants need watering twice a week sometimes.

So that's that.

When you go shopping for them, check if they have damage on the leaves, if they have any brown spots or any withering yellow leaves. Sometimes you can take the plant out of the pot and look at the roots, if they're white or brown that's good, and springy that's good, sometimes when if the roots are coming out of the pot too much that could be a little bit of neglect, I think it's good to

look in the compost as well, if it's very dry that could be a little bit of neglect and if it's got brown leaves that could be neglect, sometimes if it's too wet that could mean root rot. Like I said, in the garden centres they have a gardener looking after these plants, sometimes when you go to the supermarket they don't have that there. So you'll probably get a better well cared plant and when you bring it home with less problems, if you go to good cultivators, good providers.

Meirion – Yeah, as well you have the advice, if you've never done it before, you're not sure what to look out for in the roots or if there's a very little spot compared to a fairly big spot, and you're not exactly sure when you're a beginner what to look out for.

Jullie – And we can talk about that later if we, this will generate more enthusiast, indoor plant care enthusiasts and we can look more in detail as the weeks go on.

Meirion – Definitely, if we've got interested people who are watching, if they're really interested in learning more about plant care we can do more can't we, we can run a course, it might be online but it is still worthwhile, we can do a longer course about plant care and to look out for and How to set things up, Can't we Jullie?

What I was going to say, some of it is the type of plant you get, a tropical plant will require different demands to a succulent, from my knowledge a succulent is like a cactus, or a ...

Jullie – Cacti do come under succulent, because they have water or because they are grown in originally in the deserts etc, its amazing thing they have water in there leaves, cacti have aroids, I'll have to find the name of that, you won't have to water those as often.

Meirion – do they take the water out of the air in some ways is that right?

Jullie – Yeah I think so in their root system etc.

Meirion – Cool, so again I'm showing my lack of knowledge. So in terms of pests, do you think, what kind of pests do you need to look out for?

Jullie – So when you bring your plant home, you have to be very careful how you bring it home, by the way as well, don't just shove it in the boot, where there is no light. Sorry?

Meirion – that’s what I’ve been doing wrong?

Jullie – Ha Ok, yeah and also it can be a shock to the plant when you move it, if it’s a windy day as well, make sure that it’s contained when you bring it out from the shop or garden centre so it doesn’t give it shock, because you could run into problems, even that little time, in the future.

So you need to have it maybe in the foot well of the car or wherever you’re bringing them back from, so make sure they’re standing up and they don’t fall over.

Then when you bring them home, you need to, if you have other plants in the home, you need to kind of quarantine them, from the other plants, in case they do have pests.

I like to put mine in the bathroom, sometimes I’ll give them a little wash down with a shower, to make sure, sometimes you can’t see these little tiny pests, they are so tiny.

I have a magnifying glass that I use, some of the spider mites, mealybugs you can’t see, always with the naked eye, you might think they are a little dirt or compost, but yeah.

So, obviously, if you do have pests from a new plant which you can’t always see, you know, when you buy it, obviously if you put it with other plants it will contaminate the other plants. When you’ve done that, when you’ve found a spot for it, so you need to research how much light it needs etc.

It acclimatises, kind of thing, they don’t always like to be moved, and you could move them first of all, to find the right light. Your plant will kind of, speak to you, it will let you know from, when you get more into it, and hopefully your viewers, clients whatever, the people who are watching will get some interest and have this amazing hobby that is growing at the moment.

You’ll get to know your plant, you’ll get to know by the leaves drooping etc, like that, they need to be acclimatised.

Meirion – so we need to keep an observation on how the plants doing, you know drooping, some odd growing, I’m sure we have plants growing upstairs, some bits are growing quicker than others in the plant, that’s probably not a great thing I’m not sure, but.

Jullie – Yeah, you can turn them around, to face the light.

Meirion – Ah Ok, you want to try and find a spot for them, that would benefit them, have a little read around if it's on the internet or ask other people, find out what's best for that plant, try and stick to it and as you said then, would you wash the whole plant the compost and everything or just the leaves to get the pests off. What would you..?

Jullie – If you actually can see something or you're not quite sure there may be some sticky substance on there, which that can be a sign. I would just wash the leaves, because a lot of people when they bring their plant home as well, they will say I need to give this a good watering.

Jullie – Yes, so the two knuckle test if where you get your index finger into the soil and if it feels damp, you know, you have no soil on your finger, that's, you don't need to water it. If it's dry then I would, I would water it as well, and make sure that the water drips right through the drainage holes that the roots get a drink. Yeah, and also about re-potting, some people think 'oh, I need to re-pot this straight away', that can shock the plant as well, because it's nice and cosy in its little home there, it will be, it's already had a bit of a shock, you know, moving it from the nursery, or from wherever you got your plant from. So just don't re-pot it, you know, for a little while, let it acclimatise to your home and your conditions.

Meirion – Yeah, so they're quite sensitive things that need some time to get used to things

Jullie – Yeah

Meirion – So, just give them a wash and then just kind of leave them and if they're dry check the soil and then, if they need watering, water then, but if they don't, don't water them, is that the message?

Jullie – Yeah, yeah don't, don't don't water them. Especially if you got them from a really good, reputable, grower, cultivator, they will have looked after this and they will also have fertiliser, slow grow release fertiliser, possibly, within them as well. So, you know, just leave them, leave them for a few days and you know, just keep checking. Also, the watering really depends on the time of year. In the summer obviously it needs, they need more watering than in the autumn and winter. You really need to back off the watering because mostly, really there's two main, things with plants, when you're dealing with plants, is the light and the water. They are obviously other things as well, but if you get these two things right, then you know, you're on your way. You can,

the main thing for 'killing plants', we don't like to kill our plants but it does happen sometimes, is that people over-water, they're loving them too much, if you like. So over-watering, because once you've, err, they can get root-rot and err once that happens, you know, it is very hard then to bring them back. So it's better to be on the under-watering side because you can bring that, those back.

Meirion - Ah yeah? Oh okay, so that's a good tip. So don't over-water them, under water them and if you, you know, if you do need to water later on they will take it, but if they've had too much, then they won't want any more basically.

Jullie – Yep, we could do a whole section on how to water your plants because there are so many different, there are different methods of watering your plants as well, there's bottom-watering, there's almost leaving them dry, this is what I do, leave them quite dry, not bone dry but leave them quite dry and then I take them all to the bathroom to give them a good feed, and you know, a really good nourish, than topping up all the time, and then the water just gets logged in the pot. Also I'll do one mention of watering, it, a lot of the tropical plants are very sensitive to our tap water, because you know, we have the chemicals in them, the chlorine, the fluoride, the salts, and that can, really make your plant not happy and could even kill it. So the best water to use is rainwater. I have a balcony here so I have a big pot that I collect the rain water. You can use distilled water, but that could be a bit fussy or expensive, or just tap water but just leave it overnight, and that, the chemicals should settle etc., so you know, some plants can handle it, tap water, or try not to have it too cold though because that can shock them, but that is quite an important point as well, what water you use.

Meirion – Well I didn't know that. So yeah, so some way of getting rainwater is the best, then if it's tap water, just leave it. That's really interesting, yeah. So there's quite a lot of chemicals helping our health, for it's not always good for the plants.

Jullie – Yeah.

Meirion – Err, we haven't mentioned feeding or fertilising. You've mentioned a little bit, the way it's potted already, it might have a slow release but is there anything else we need to do? Maybe after a month or two, with fertilising or with feeding?

Jullie – Yeah, so my tropical plants, like my banana plant over here, I don't know if you can see it, I'll show you at the end, it's, and that needs feeding / fertilising every two weeks in the summer. In and some of these bigger leafy / foliage plants do need more fertilising, and when ---- got in touch, going on about feeding, I was like what is feeding? Going on about feeding, what, do I give my plants a sandwich, what are you talking about by feeding? There's various ways of feeding your plant, I use a liquid fertiliser, you can get granules, you can get like these spikes etc. You can make your own compost fertiliser as well, I would say garden compost, I wouldn't always use it on indoor plants, it could be too harsh for them, and you could use a little, but that we can discuss, we can do a whole section on fertilising as well, you can make your own fertiliser from egg shells etc, some of your compost that you throw away, it needs to be boiled up and you use the juice of those, like potato water, rice water, you know your vegetables, especially in the lockdown where people couldn't always get out maybe to get fertiliser, you can use your own as long as you don't put salt in it that's fine.

Meirion – That dries everything out, salt kills plants and living things.

Jullie - Yeah, in the winter lot of plant care people don't fertilise at all. Some people, if your plant though is still growing you could fertilise it, but not half as much as you do in the summer.

Meirion – Yeah, so there's quite a few things that depends if it's a small young plant, then fertiliser is more important, if it's a grown plant it's not as important.

Jullie – No, if they're growing they will need fertilising, some plants can get huge, and some can grow to 8 feet tall even in your house, you could back off on fertilising if you don't want them to grow or prune them if you don't want them to get too tall.

Meirion – Yes, there we go, there's a whole episode there on just fertilising and all these different things.

Jullie – You can also over fertilise as well, you can over fertilise, and then you run into problems then, you could kill the plant quite quickly actually, you'll see the decline of that. So, I use organic, I can't say the name, but I use organic fertiliser, it's liquid and it needs to be heavily diluted, really heavily diluted, yeah, we can talk about that again as well.

Meirion - Your list of easy care plants, is there anything that's fairly easy to look after, some people who would like plants around, but don't really, might not have the time, or the wanting to care for them all the time heavily?

Jullie – Yes, so some of the easy care plant, I've got a little list here somewhere, let me just see, if I've written that there, ok, I'll just do it from the top of my head, easy care plants, Spider Plants, now we probably remember these from if we went to our Nana's house, there would always be a Spider plant there, they are lovely plants and you can make lots of other plants from them as well. They have pups, is what they're called. These little flower.

I'll show you one of my spider plants here, this is actually from a local nursery they kind of cultivated it themselves it looks quite tropical, they have these little pups here.

Which you can put in water or soil, and you'll get more spider plants from that.

Another, there really good, The Golden Pothos, which is called Devils Ivy, which is this here, it is a vining plant.

Meirion – Is it the big one on the left there?

Jullie – This one here.

Meirion - I can't work out, which one it is, the Devils Vine on the left.

Jullie – This here, yes, with the yellow leaves, you can find these anywhere and they're very easy. They do like being, well the light isn't such a problem with these, they can tolerate lower light as well, as maybe not full sun, but they are very hardy, they are called Devils Ivy because as they are quite hard to kill.

Meirion – Hahaha

Jullie – The Dracaena plants, the Dragon plant, they are quite easy, they can tolerate lower lights.

Meirion - Oh Wow.

Jullie – This plant here is called a Zanzibar, Gem ZZ plant. This is actually a succulent, they have rhizomes in the root and they can be in a lower light space as well.

I have palm here, which is, this has been quite easy for me, and some people do struggle with palms.

Can you see that?

Meirion – Yes, I can see that, that's really, it's a really impressive plant actually, and they all look green and alive.

Jullie – Hahaha, Well I hope so.

Ok, the next plant easy is, the Monstera plant, Swiss cheese plant, got lovely variegated split leaves here.

Meirion – Yeah, Lovely

Jullie – They will tolerate various lighting, but if you want to get these lovely fenestrated leaves, they need sunlight, and a lot of sunlight, another easy to care plant are called snake plants or Mother in law's tongues. They were...

Meirion – Hahaha

Jullie – Hahaha, it's not very nice, sorry to all the lovely mother-in-laws out there. This is a whale's fin or Sharks fin, which is a part of the Sansevieria they used to be Sansevieria now they're in the Dracaena family. Ok we got the Yuka plant, this is quite an easy plant, as well it tolerated various lights...

Meirion – I've heard of a Yuka plant before, is it from somewhere like Australia or somewhere like that, and is it from there?

Jullie – Yeah they are tropical, desert plants really as well, they've got this thick stem here, they can grow really tall as well, they are kind of slowish growers actually,

Another easy plant, let me just think, these are lovely little things, and these are called lucky bamboos

Meirion – Ah Right.

Jullie - And they are used in Feng Shiue, and I just have them in water, some pebbles and they make really lovely displays, they also make great for gifts. You should never give just four, you can give one, two, three, five etc. up to 12 but never just four because that's not good luck apparently.

Meirion – Oh Right.

Jullie – Yeah so here I've got the air plants, they're fairly easy but they do need watering, now air plants don't actually need soil or water, they just grow, in the air!

Meirion – Wow.

Jullie – And I've made little displays with them here, and they look very pretty. I don't always have them here, I do have them in different settings, in different parts of my home. This is, and you can also put these in terrariums. This is sarracenia which is a carnivorous plant, which have little nectar in their fronds here, and you know, the flies, they trap the flies. I didn't always like the idea of these but I thought sometimes you can get little fungus gnats that can grow around your plants, they don't always do much damage but they, you know, they're a bit of a nuisance, so you know, I thought they were quite handy to have as well, they have a purpose as well.

This is a staghorn fern, and it just grows in, so this can actually grow on wood, you can mount it on wood, like this, so it's quite an amazing plant, that's tropical. I've got some other ferns, this is easy, this is the birds nest fern, that's very easy. This is another fern, it's quite easy. And the Anthuriums, you'll see these a lot, you can get different varieties, pink ones, white ones, they're really easy. I've made, from one plant, I've made about four plants, from one plant, from propagation.

This is a little Hoya kerri, they're really cute as gifts, with their little heart shape. And I've got the bunny, bunny paw, I think they call that, it's a cacti. There's some aloe Vera there, they're easy, they don't need much water. And this one, this actually fell off the top of this one, and it grew back again ha so it's quite amazing.

Here this is actually a succulent and it's called the sweetheart plant, and it's actually a semi-succulent, even though it's vining.

Meirion - Ah wow.

Jullie – Yeah so I've got some little terrariums and terrariums here,

Meirion – What are they Julie? What terrariums and terrariums?

Jullie – ah so Terrariums are like little indoor gardens and eco-systems. I'm going to make some more where their lids are on, they have their own lids so that they have their own humidity and you don't even have to water them. But when they're open like this, you do need to water them from time to time, which you know, we'll talk about that again. They also make lovely presents at Christmas as well.

Meirion – But they're good for your wellbeing I'd imagine, you've got to make and be creative about?

Jullie – Yeah, I'm going to do one with my daughter after school today. This is called a Wandering Jude or a Wandering Jew (sp?), very easy to grow. Rubber plant, really easy, they're quite easy, need lots of full sun. This is quite a mini one but you can get them really tall as well. This is a Christmas cacti, it gives pink flowers, that is actually a cactus and that's, that's quite a new plant for me but is quite easy to grow.

Meirion – Wow.

Jullie– I'm sure there are other ones to grow, I'll just give you some, I'll just tell you a little bit about maybe some of the more tropical plants and some may be a little harder to grow. Talking about the terrariums, this is my new favourite thing at the moment and this, it's an aquatic plant that you can use in fish tanks. It's an Alii plant, you just submerge that, totally in water. Some of them you can have them coming out of the top as well and you can put little stones and shells and it's a lovely thing to do with your children or grandparents you know, a generational thing. So I don't know if you've seen these before?

Meirion – I haven't. Could you go down just a little bit? We can only see the top bit. Lovely. No, I haven't seen any of those, it looks like an aquarium but with a plant.

Jullie – Haha

Meirion – No, I haven't seen any before, before you mentioned terrarium or taranium.

Jullie – Yeah terrarium.

Meirion – Terrarium, no I'd never heard of those words before. So I'm learning a lot as we go along, straight away.

Jullie – This is my Banana plant, it's huge, and it gives me a leaf every week, then this is a mini banana plant here, very tropical this needs lots of sun, however this does not need as much sun because it can get sun burnt, it's got a little bit of sun burn here, it's got very delicate leaves.

These are my favourite plants here, well there all my favourites but this is one of my beauties, it's a Calathea Ornata and its like, and can you see the pinstripes?

Meirion – Yes, it’s startling, like a Zebra.

Jullie – Yeah, it looks like someone has painted it. Nature is amazing.

All these here, this is a Stromanthae, this is amazing, it’s got pink, purple leaves, green, yellow, white.

Meirion - Can you go down a bit more ... there we are.

Jullie – This one here is a Calathea Medallion, its got purple leaves.

Meirion - Are they quite difficult to grow, you say?

Jullie – Yes, they can, and this one here, I just want to show you this how amazing that is, it looks like it’s been painted as well, I’ve never seen one of these around even on the internet or anything. And this was a local grower and that might be worth some money because, you know it’s quite rare. This is the thing as well, so I’ll just come back, this is the thing about some of these plants, they actually, can be very expensive, they can be very costly, especially if you get the rare houseplants and, but they could, you could give you, you could make money from them in the future, by growing, so they are kind of, good collections to have.

We can talk as well, about the costs, how to keep costs down by propagation, swapping, what to look out for. Pots can be quite expensive, so you can make your own pots, you can go to some of the charity shops, even paint, if you find a pot you don’t think is so nice and re-paint it, and it’s nice thing to do with the family, as well.

Meirion – So we can upcycle, get something as a container, that’s a normal container and be creative with it, jazz it up in some way and make into pot for plants.

Jullie – I’ve made some of my own plants from Crochet and Macrame, I just wanted to show you this other thing as well, Oh I’ve got an ivy in there, this is an Avocado seed, can you see the roots on it here.

Meirion – YES!

Jullie – This is a lovely project that you can do with your family, your children, so you just get some tooth picks, bowl of water, an avocado after you’ve had your salad, give it a little clean and then let the roots grow. And then what you will get, I feel like Blue Peter now, before and after.

Meirion – Hahaha, here’s one we made earlier!

Jullie – Yes, that’s right, and then you will get THIS. Can you see this?

Meirion – I can see a big, leaves, 4 leaves, and a trunk of a ...

Jullie – So this is the avocado.

Meirion – Wow, that’s fantastic.

Jullie – You can do that with pineapples, cutting the top of the pineapples and putting that into water.

You can do it with lots of fruit and vegetables, so we can do that, we can have a session on that.

Meirion – Yes, that’s another option, if people are interested, definitely, how to grow your own avocados and pineapples, that would be really interesting. Thank you Jullie, that’s a brilliant little taster, of how to look after plants, how to grow them at home. As Jullie and I’ve said, if anybody’s interested in finding out more, please contact the Community Wellbeing Team, and we can arrange to have sessions put on. Thank you Jullie

Jullie – Can I just say about the Wellbeing effect? It has been proven, scientifically proven, that plants yes, do make us happy, there great for our mood, I just want to go through a few of the little pointers of what they can do for us.

They can alleviate stress, they, people can feel more productive, really good, if someone is on the computers for a long time you can alleviate your eyes, something is moving a little bit there. They can be sensory with he smells, there air purifying, they’re just great.

I think for me it’s the connection of nature, connection not just with nature, with other people, as well, communities and caring for something, watching it grow, getting your children, family and friends involved. It’s a wonderful thing to get into, and just for the aesthetics, and the more that you get into it, and the more that you can see growing from your household waste, like an avocado etc, it’s so rewarding and hopefully your viewers will see this and reap the benefits like we’re doing.

Meirion – Yes, indeed hopefully they will get inspired, Fantastic, Thank you very much.

