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Grow Plants in Your Room

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It takes only a bulb
or slip plus some
spring enthusiasm to

Grow Plants in

by Jane Novak and Ruth Peterson

THAT PROVERBIAL green thumb is easy to acquire, and potted plants can give your room a spring lift. All a plant asks of its gardener is a good location and water, and if you supply these, you'll find that your potted plant will almost take care of itself.

You can find a wide selection of plants at the college greenhouse. Some of the easiest kinds of flowering plants to grow are the geranium, petunia, wax begonia and African violet. They all have bright, pretty flowers and they keep their small size and will not run wild in your college room.

Bulbs most suitable for growing indoors are early tulips, daffodils, crocuses, scilla, hyacinth, and grape hyacinth. Any of these produce bright spring flowers which would be cheerful in your college room.

Green leaves of foliage plants always give a bright look to a dull room. If you like vines, you might choose from English ivy, philodendron, devil's ivy, wandering Jew, or grape ivy. If the vines grow long enough, you might train them to crawl across your window sill or over your mirror. If you'd rather have a plant that stays more within its limits, you might choose peperonia, Chinese evergreen, a rubber plant or a bow-string hemp.

All of these plants will stand a certain amount of neglect or over-indulgence from you, the caretaker. House plants don't demand much attention. If you'll give them a good start and a little consideration from day to day, they'll repay you with dividends. In many cases the plants you'll buy will have been potted by a florist and probably will have been given a good start. Except for watering, they won't need your attention for 2 to 3 months.

Follow Special Potting Instructions

If you decide to pot your own plants, though, there are a few things you should remember. The pot you choose is quite important. You may have heard that porous clay pots are the best kind. They are when they can rest on a damp surface and absorb moisture. But in your room they can absorb moisture only from the soil in the pot. This tends to dry the soil. So the best kind of pot to use in a dorm room is the glazed clay pot which will not absorb moisture from the soil. Most pots have a drainage hole in the bottom; in addition, a layer of broken pieces of flower pot, pebbles, or gravel should be placed at the bottom of the pot. Then add the potting soil.

You'll have to decide how many pots of flowers you'll want and mix enough soil to fill those pots. A good mixture is one made up of equal parts of a good light soil, peat moss, and sand mixed thoroughly. You can buy peat moss at any nursery. You'll be wise to add to the soil bone meal, dried cow manure, or some commercial plant food. The successful growth of your plant depends to a large extent upon how well this potting soil is prepared. All of the nourishment necessary for a plant to grow and blossom must come from the small amount of soil in the pot in which it is grown. Therefore, it is important that the soil contain the essential elements. You may want to give your plants supplementary feedings with the convenient food tablets that are sold by most florists.

Any number of locations are suited to plants — the top of your chest of drawers, the corner of your desk, your window sill, your night stand, or an

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occasional table. If the location is one where the light falls strongly on the plant from one direction, you'll find that turning the pot every few days will encourage straight upright growth.

Remember to Water

Because your plants have been given a good start, your day to day care consists merely of watering them. The frequency and amount of watering depends upon the temperature and humidity of your room and, of course, upon the needs of the particular plant. If the air is dry and warm, water will naturally be lost more quickly from the soil and leaves, and the plant will have to be watered more often. The soil should be kept damp — not dripping wet or bone dry. Try to avoid shocking your plants with very cold water. Near-room temperature is best. Do remember to occasionally dust the leaves of vines by spraying them with water.

If you plan to try your hand at growing bulbs, there are two methods of growing them, depending on the type of bulb used. The Dutch bulbs, tulip and hyacinth, are potted right side up. Fill in the space around the bulbs with soil to about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of the top of the pot, and keep in a cool dark place for several weeks. By keeping your closet door closed, the closet will remain cool and dark. The shelf is just the place for starting these bulbs. Keep the bulbs there until the flower stalk has begun to shoot up. Then you can bring them out into your room. Begin to water them gradually and then increase the amount of water as the stalk begins to grow.

Water culture is a relatively new phase of plant growing. A sweet potato vine is a good example of what can be done in the way of water culture. Place a sweet potato in a bottle or jar so that the lower tip is kept moist. As long as the potato is not submerged in water or floating in it, roots and leaves should develop, and you'll soon add another hardy vine to your collection. Philodendron and English ivy may also be grown in water. For water culture the containers that may be used are decorative in themselves. A pair of blown glass swans, perhaps, holding trailing philodendron or ivy are really quite attractive.

Once you begin to keep plants in your room, you'll want to try more and more varieties. You may develop quite a collection of plants. Gardening is just that way. A taste of success is all that's needed to urge you on to new ventures.

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