

June 5

We never seem to talk much about indoor plants these days and I don't know why.

It was such a big thing in the past...maybe some think its old fashioned to have a plant indoors!!

If you consider our outdoor challenges with water, space and time, maybe getting a few good indoor specimens will help keep us nice and green.

Generally speaking, plants that do well indoors need good indirect light, well drained rich soil and believe it or not...a minimal watering programme.

If you have not had success in the past the reason was probably too much water.

Forgetting to water them can be a lifesaver!!

Certain flowering plants like Cymbidium orchids prefer to be outdoors but can be brought indoors during their flowering period.

I see so many instances where they are received as gifts in flower, look well for a few weeks indoors and then left in a stuffy dark corner to die slowly.

This is the plight of many flowering plants but if kept in a suitable spot outdoors and only put inside for a short flowering period, then life goes on.

Foliage plants are more suited to indoor conditions given sufficient light and in the past it was all about Rubber plants, Delicious Monsters, palms and any other exotic looking leafy plant!!

If that's what you want...great but let me suggest a few other special plants that grow very well indoors.

My favourite I will mention again... Natal Mahogany- *Trichelia emetica*.

I had one for more than 10 years in a pot and it never turned a hair.

It grew to about 2metres in the same pot but when transplanted to a bigger pot it went on to become a proper tree.

It needed a watering only when it was dry....and this is the secret of success with most indoor growing plants....water well when dry.

Don't follow a daily or weekly program as water requirements change according to the weather conditions outdoors.

Many of our succulents also do well indoors with sufficient light and minimal water like The Mother in Laws tongue family which is huge and diverse.

In the past a favourite was the tall West African species *Sansevieria trifasciata*, then we noticed that our very own South African species were up to the task.

A good choice is *Sansevieria pearsonii*...sometimes referred to as the Elephants toothpick with its cylindrical leaves.

It thrives in a pot and with sufficient light its creamy scented flowers will surprise you.

They are also known to improve air quality!!

Many of our succulent plants like the *Crassula*'s do exceptionally well indoors.

One particular common species, *Crassula ovata* is a good example.

Fleshy leaves and thick stems make this plant resemble a perfect bonsai.

Water....what water....half a cup every fortnight....surely you can forgo a cup of tea twice a month and give it over to this handsome plant.

I think it is a dream plant and a good idea to try a whole range of *Crassula*'s indoors.

You remember the old Stoep Jacaranda a *Plectranthus* species that was a very popular veranda and indoor plant.

Quite a number of the bushy and groundcover *Plectranthus* do well indoors but have never been promoted enough.

There was also the 'money plant' *Plectranthus verticillatus* we always had hanging in the bathroom, a success story that faded out of fashion....let's get it back into the steamy bathroom.

Another easy, persistent, old fashioned rocker we don't use enough of indoors is the infamous *Aspidistra*!!

Its common names are so descriptive....The Cast Iron Plant- says it all or The Bar Room Plant which tells us it can handle bad language and rough conditions!! It can take low light, extreme temperature fluctuations, irregular watering, poor soil and still lands up on the podium as probably the best indoor plant.

Its natural home is Taiwan and Japan but has been used as a pot plant throughout the world since early Victorian times.

I have never seen it as a fashionable plant, just a good practical and useful all rounder.

There is always a big selection to choose from at the Garden Centre but my advice is, go for the hardy plants that can take neglect as you will not always remember to water or make sure it gets enough light.

One thing you should always remember is that overwatering is the downfall of most indoor plants.

Right now your winter veggie garden should be on the move.

If you missed sowing certain seeds then get seedlings in quickly.

At the moment I think just relax, enjoy the change of season and let nature get on with the job....