

INSIDE THE ONLINE PLANT TRIBE

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We're living in an age of information overload fuelled by the web. Some experts say the internet is having a negative impact on our mental health, and has changed the way we form relationships and has even altered the way our brains function. However, in a very 21st century paradox, it's also allowing something as earthy and natural as plants to bring people together and provide exactly the opposite effect.

Over recent years, green-fingered influencers such as bloggers, photographers and plant-lovers of all kinds have been building a global online community where they're sharing stunning plant photography, styling ideas, stories and advice.

In 2018 Igor Josifovic and Judith de Graaff – from Munich and Paris respectively – founded an international hub for likeminded plant-loving people. Named Urban Jungle Bloggers, it will this year be



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punching for a million followers.

They tell us, "In our highly digitalised and fast-paced urban lifestyle we strive for something natural, something to root us. Plants are one example of this. Bringing plants into our homes reconnects us to nature, to a slower lifestyle, and it teaches us patience and mindfulness. This is particularly true for the younger generation of city dwellers."

One study has claimed that every day we're inundated with the equivalent of 34 gigabytes of information, or about 23 words per second during waking hours. No surprise then, that we're desperately seeking ways to escape it all and bring some natural goodness to contrast with the rest of our daily lives. And the stats back it up. Pinterest searches for indoor plants increased by 90% in 2017 with specific searches for 'terrariums', 'cactus plants' and 'tropical plants' also moving up in the ranks. Meanwhile, Google searches for 'air purifying plants' and 'Aloe vera' were up an enormous 550% in the same year.

"People living in urban environments want to get back in touch with nature," agree Magnus Edmonson and India Hobson. They're Sheffield-based professional photographers who also run a hugely popular blog and Instagram feed named Haarkon, where they share breathtaking shots of plant-filled spaces. "Plants bring that greenhouse experience into our home, and we very much enjoy the aesthetic they add to complement and soften hard surfaces," they say. So much so that they've recently published a book named Glasshouse Greenhouse which shares their plant-led adventures.

A GREEN COMMUNITY

Twice a day, Igor and Judith scroll through hundreds of photos that have been uploaded by their followers and tagged with #URBANJUNGLEBLOGGERS, selecting



their favourite shots to share on their own feed. They're providing a medium that is connecting people by sharing tips, tales and ideas across a worldwide plant community, and it's thriving. They explain, "The idea was so popular that more and more people wanted to join in. Eventually, Urban Jungle Bloggers was born as a green community uniting plant loving people from around the world and it's

JOIN IN: STYLING IDEAS

Try creating a "plant shelfie", photographing a shelf on which you display a collection of your favourite houseplants arranged together with personal items and décor such as candles, books, clocks, gems, or souvenirs. Use a mixture of plants that grow upwards as well as some that have hanging leaves and vines, they'll add extra texture and provide an interesting look.

You can also hang plants from your ceiling or walls. There are lots of different plant hangers on the market from macramé to ceramic pots and there are various DIY ideas that allow you to hang plants and avoid using up precious floor and surface space. Plus, hanging plants in front of a window means you don't need net curtains!

still growing steadily. We like to call them the 'plant tribe' because there is a palpable green power out there!"

They're not alone in their efforts to inspire others online. A simple search for #indoorjungle on Instagram will pull over 280,000 images uploaded by real people, proud of their plant growing efforts. Meanwhile, more surreal accounts exist, such as 'Plants on Pink' which is a strangely pleasing grid of plants paired with pink backgrounds, and then there's 'Boys with Plants' which shares shots of men



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PLANT BLOGGERS AT HOME

Igor and Judith share their favourite green spaces in their own homes.

Judith: I have a cinema room that is about the same height as a tree and it's filled with plants, so it feels a bit like a treehouse. The sun filters through the leaves which with the help of a small disco ball makes moving patterns of light on the walls. My cacti and Euphorbia live here, together with most of my plant cuttings - spider plants, *Philodendron*, *Hoya*, *Tradescantia* and so many more!

Igor: My kitchen is full of plants on open shelves and in the winter it's where I house my balcony plants that have to be brought indoors. Thanks to lots of natural light it's home to a whole range - *Monstera*, *Pilea*, *Tradescantia*, succulents, cacti, *Alocasia*, staghorn fern, spider plants and more.

surrounded by all things green. Both boast over 100,000 followers.

What's exciting is that the plant tribe is no longer confined to cyberspace, as Igor and Judith can prove. "We've hosted events, participated at plant swaps, collaborated with brands and worked with venues and cafés. People meet, they exchange ideas, tips, knowledge and even plants! It is a real community - both on and offline."