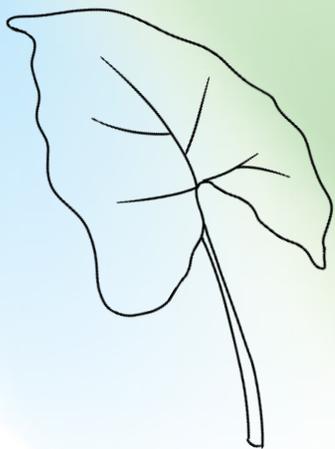


herbs taste the best when grown under stress



“Do you remember when we first met? When we first spoke, you were starving.”

Two months ago when I met with my therapist for the first time, I was working two jobs, at school 4 days a week, and running off of 1 soylent and a glass of water a day. I allowed myself more food after I had completed all my work or if I had some time to get food to eat during class or while commuting. I was never really the “live to eat” kind of person. I ate to keep productive because I had a schedule to stick to. And all through this I still couldn’t figure out why I was so burnt out all the time.



Later, my therapist led me through a guided meditation. She asked me how my body felt, and when I subtracted the clutter of incomplete tasks in my brain, it boiled down to one thing. I was so fucking hungry.

In the coming weeks, I started to actively listen to what my body was telling me. When I was thirsty, I paused my work and got water. When my eyes started to droop, I knew my work could wait because I needed to sleep. The human body is a magically assembled machine, and I’ve slowly learned to respect that. But through quarantine, this work life balance started to

topple over. I started sleeping at 5, and waking up at 11:55 for my 12pm classes. I started eating one meal a day again, because I had so much work and so little motivation. Cups started to pile up on my desk again, and my plants started to wilt.

I see parts of myself in all my plants, and because of that, my plants represent the different parts of me. Some need consistent care and watering by a south facing window. Some thrive with minimal care, but still can’t be forgotten. Some plants grow like crazy and need to be pruned back sometimes, and some plants have a mind of their own that I’m still learning to understand. But no matter what, all the plants and all the parts of me need love, patience, and care.



Growth

The idea of stagnation is always on the back of my mind, but it's important to remember that growth is hardly ever lateral success - it's forward momentum.

To talk about growth, let's first talk about pruning. Pruning is getting rid of parts of plants that are no longer useful.

Reasons one might prune

1. Removing older stems encourages a plant to put energy into new growth
2. Control or direct new growth- Each cut will stop the plant's growth in one direction and redirect it in another, guiding the shape and size of the plant.
3. Prevent the spread of disease
4. Increase the number and quality of fruit, flowers and foliage
5. Compensate for roots loss during transplanting, thus balancing the plant's health
6. Improve air circulation and allow light to reach inner and lower leaves



A common “problem” with dieffenbachia is that their bottom leaves often turn yellow and die seemingly out of nowhere. I've seen a lot of people frantically ask for help on houseplant forums because they're worried that their plant is slowly dying. But in fact, the reason dieffenbachias lose their bottom leaves is because those leaves are the oldest, and the plant would rather reallocate their energy towards new growth.

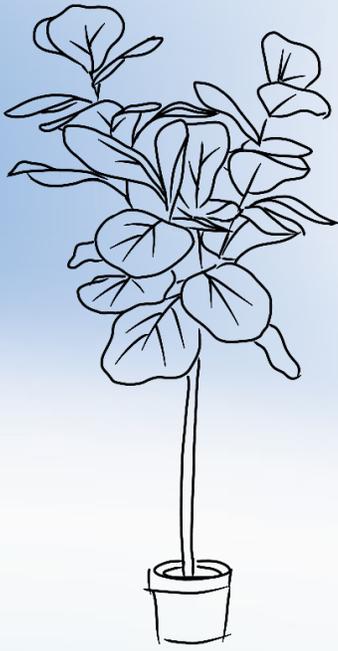
Outgrowing:

When a plant outgrows its pot, it literally means its growth can no longer be contained. Just like humans, we sometimes outgrow our circumstances, people, an idea, a place, etc. If the plant stays in the pot they no longer fit, their growth will be stunted, and the roots will become root-bound. This means the roots are so tightly packed it will eventually strangle itself.

Cut ties from those that no longer serve you. Just because something has been with you for a long time doesn't mean they are meant to stay. Not all good things are permanent and that's okay. Sometimes parts of you will die in order for new parts to grow.



My fiddle leaf fig tree is one of my favorite plants. It's gorgeous, doesn't give me a hard time, and never dies even when I leave for weeks. (I use a self-watering bulb when I leave) But like that One Direction song, nature doesn't even try or know it's beautiful - it just is. (Not sure why I brought One Direction into this but we're rolling with it) But sometimes, we humans have specific aesthetic wants. So when a fiddle leaf tree has some bare spots on the trunk where you'd like leaves and branches to stem from, you can simply create a small lesion with your gardening shears until you see some tree sap come out. This is called notching, and this is also how you turn a fiddle bush into a tree. By doing this you are shocking the plant by wounding it, making it redirect its energy into creating new growth from where it's been "notched".



Each cut is an opportunity.

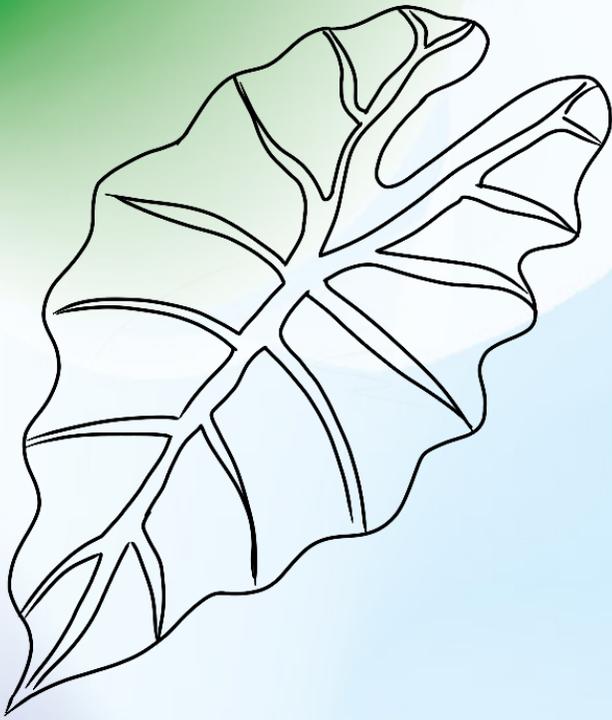
Propagation

Propagating a plant is the process of creating new plants from one.

Snake plants and pothos are my favorite hardy low light tolerant plants that are almost impossible to kill - even when you cut them up into pieces, each piece will grow into a new plant of its own that can then be shared with loved ones.

A plant propagation is the modern day olive branch. And as Naomi Huffman put it, "Giving someone part of something you kept alive conveys an explicit trust in their capacity for thoughtfulness and tenderness: It says, I admire the way you live, the care you take to survive your own life."





Failure

My Alocasia Polly was on my plant wishlist for a minute now, but since getting it, it's been nothing but sass from this plant. It is the most fickle plant in my collection, and I have already lost

half its leaves due to inadequate humidity(I think). But like I said before, my plants represent different parts of me, and some parts of me can be hard to understand as well. So like any relationship, patience is key. And if my alocasia polly dies, I'll learn from this experience and try again when I have a more suitable environment for it next time.



Roots

With all plants, a strong root system is critical for survival. If your plant isn't thriving, inspect the roots for problems and signs of stress. Beautiful leaves don't come without strong, healthy roots. Think 3 Little Pigs.

Sunlight

No matter what type, all plants grow towards the sun. Grow towards what nurtures you and you will grow stronger.

Responsibility

Unlike myself, the wellbeing of my plants is non-negotiable because I've spent so much time and energy growing them. But why doesn't the same idea apply to myself?

I've spent way more time growing and developing than any of my plants have, so shouldn't my wellbeing be the most important?



Hard times don't mean you can't thrive.



Besides, herbs grown under stress taste better.