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# The Unexpected Houseplant: 220 Extraordinary Choices For Every Spot In Your Home



## Synopsis

It's time for plant lovers to dust off their houseplants, update their image, and discover just how exciting, trendy, and crucial plants can be in the home. *The Unexpected Houseplant*, by renowned plant authority Tovah Martin, isn't your typical, old-fashioned, dowdy houseplant book. Martin's approach is revolutionary—picture brilliant spring bulbs by the bed, lush perennials brought in from the garden, quirky succulents in the kitchen, even flowering vines and small trees growing beside an easy chair. Martin brings an evangelist's zeal to the task of convincing homeowners that indoor plants aren't just a luxury—they're a necessity. In addition to design flair, houseplants clean indoor air, which can be up to ten times more polluted. Along with loads of visual inspiration, readers will learn how to make unusual selections, where to best position plants in the home, and valuable tips on watering, feeding, grooming, pruning, and troubleshooting, season by season.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Will boost the confidence of even the most black-thumbed houseplant owner.

Martin's can-do enthusiasm is infectious, her creativity inspiring. —Booklist

“An imaginative guide to bringing the delights of the garden indoors. —

Publishers Weekly “All indoor plant hobbyists in every geographic area will enjoy and learn from this book. Its fresh approach deserves a thumbs-up. —Library

Journal “[Martin] has a witty, creative voice that warms her new book. —

•Traditional Home “Tovah Martin’s newest book is no dry encyclopedic volume: Her personal, engaging writing style is as entertaining as it is informative.”  
 •Country Gardens “As the air gets crisper outside, it’s time to rethink what plants can do to enliven our interior spaces. Tips on how to care for ordinary and not-so-ordinary species are revealed, so non-green-thumbers need not fear.”  
 •Design New England “This book engenders so much enthusiasm for indoor flora that you can find yourself outdoors with a shovel in your hand robbing your own garden of plants to bring inside.”  
 •Gardenista “This isn’t just another book on houseplants; it’s an invitation to adventure.”  
 •Horticulture “Martin writes in a captivatingly personal way. It’s Martin’s exuberance and deep knowledge that’ll keep you reading.”  
 •Seattle Times “Martin’s book makes one look very differently at the whole houseplant phenomenon. It isn’t so much a practical guide as a challenge to think outside the box when trying to bring the outside inside.”  
 •Daily Hampshire Gazette “As the air gets crisper outside, it’s time to rethink what plants can do to enliven our interior spaces. Tips on how to care for ordinary and not-so-ordinary species are revealed, so non-green thumbs need not fear.”  
 Refreshing in the world of garden books.  
 •Philadelphia Inquirer “A good book for plant geeks and anyone tired of the same old peace lilies.”  
 •Harrisburg Patriot-News “A smart, stylish book on indoor gardening.”  
 •Pacific Horticulture

This isn’t your grandmother’s houseplant book. Renowned expert Tovah Martin thinks it’s time we dusted off houseplants, updated their image, and discovered just how exciting, rewarding, current, and crucial plants can be in our experience of home.

Picture brilliant spring bulbs by your bed, lush perennials brought in from the garden, quirky succulents in the kitchen, even flowering vines and small trees growing beside your easy chair. You’ll learn about all these plants and more, including placement, watering, feeding, grooming, pruning, and troubleshooting. Comprehensive, up-to-the-minute, and engagingly personal, The Unexpected Houseplant is for beginners, practiced green thumbs, and anyone who wants to infuse a bit of green into their décor. So join the indoor-gardening revolution—where plants and people intertwine and live happily ever after.

A good book, if I don’t feel like the target audience. I’m not an outdoor gardener looking to liven

chilly months with overwintered outdoor plants. As a cramped apartment dweller, none of my plants can get a summer break outdoors, and Tovah's admonishment that no one needs grow lights just isn't the case with only northern windows. Nevertheless, some of her suggestions will do well with a northwestern window and some aggressive pruning to combat etiolation, from prior experience. More so than a guide to particular plants, however, this book is a guide to how to get houseplants to work for you. From my own experience, you really do need to -love- your plants to make them live. My finicky maidenhairs are resplendent with fronds, and the temperamental tropicals are taking over, but the humdrum, basic begonia has only two leaves, and the "can you take care of this for me until I can take it back -- (five years later it's still here)" Aloe is going brown. Tovah also explains her particular situation, and repeats it often - cold, dim winters, and summers outdoors. And this is important - as she highlights - because you really need to know your home's environment to know what plants to keep (and where). My own thoughts have never jived with the "disposable houseplant" ideology, as best evidenced by some hyacinth I forced in February that is still in my kitchen (why cut down the leaves if it's still growing?). But she makes a good case for growing some plants I've always wanted indoors, even though I have no outdoors they can head to after that. There's a decent focus on flowers, which I can't do because of allergic-to-everything housemates, in case that is also your situation, be forewarned. Of course, flowers are the big attention-grabbers in any garden, so it makes sense. Of the "plants that are sold as houseplants" expect to see few of the "easy care" options, but of course, that's kind of the point-- dracaenas are never unexpected. Many are the notoriously difficult: gardenias, jasmines, calatheas and croton get mentions, but the easy-for-any-conditions-plants are mostly peperomias, bromeliads and sansevieria. Admittedly, quite a few of the plants are still easy, but they are usually sold for outdoor purposes, or mail-order-only exotics. There's a bit about basic care near the end, and it's decent. She is the sort who keeps everything organic - pesticides, dirt, etc. So don't expect tables about which chemical for what pest or what have you. As for my critiques: well, as mentioned earlier, this book seems to -expect- a house to work with. Since she keeps few plants indoors for the summer, many of her choices would be exceedingly impermanent in dim indoor lighting. She wants you to have an eastern- or western- exposure (or maybe south). Since she doesn't run much heat, she seems to underestimate how much some plants need humidity that they just won't get in the average home. All the photos, though beautiful, look staged. I want to see where the plant grows day-in and day-out, so that I can judge the light it's getting versus what I can give it. Other than those modest complaints, the book is fun funny, and maybe it can light a passion in your heart to try houseplants again!

This is an ideal book for people looking for something to inspire them to think outside of the box when it comes to houseplants. A small fuschia in a decorative pot on the windowsill, who would've thought? A row of cypress plants for an evergreen border look? However, I have years of carnivorous plant experience so I find it hard to believe her trumpet plants look that good in only partial sun. A Venus flytrap would, but not the others. Trumpet plants love full sun and are difficult to look their best in the home in all but the sunniest windows. Other than that, it is full of ideas with care instructions for houseplants you may not have thought of using in the home, plus some standards. But the standards often have a twist to them--different varieties, etc. She has lists of nurseries for the plants in the back of the book if you have trouble finding the variety that you will inevitably fall in love with in the photos. She is a chatty writer so someone looking for a straight how-to may be frustrated as she gives tips throughout the book in addition to her how-to part in the back. My favorite tip is on watering--almost fill the pot to the brim once and then stop!! She also has a section on plants she can never get to work for her. So forget the hibiscus. Or take it on as a personal challenge from her. :) The photography is really beautiful. Really beautiful. And at least half the reason I broke down and bought the book after taking it out of the library for extended periods of time for two winters in a row. Very inspirational and a definite find for those of us who feel they have been there and done that when it comes to houseplant ideas.

I was delighted with Tovah Martin's book for several reasons. Of course the illustrations are both lovely and practical. The photography both sets off the plants and shows realistically how a plant can be placed in the home. There are a number of plants that I have grown, but the book gave me both hints for their care and new ideas. What I like best about the book is this: Martin's plants are real! Obviously she knows how to bring out the best in a plant. But her specimens are definitely not the typical overlush, over fertilized, over pruned, root bound house plants bought in floral shops, nurseries, and big stores. They are real. Now that I have read her book, I don't have to feel inferior because my beloved plants do not look like magazine illustrations. They are happy and healthy and natural looking, as Martin's plants are. The book also inspired me to try some plants that I have not grown before--including some not in the book! Why not! If bulbs can be forced indoors during winter, then some vines or woodland plants might be just the thing for a bare space or a low-lit corner of the house. A good book inspires you not only with what is in it, but with what your mind can do with the ideas it germinates. Martin's use of different pot shapes is delightful, and I will certainly vary some pots now, although I try to keep to a strict color scheme for the pots. Her

arrangement of plants by season is unusual and helpful in a new way. But, understand, that you won't find the usual index of plants that like sun, like dry, etc. The information is all in the descriptions of the plant, but you'll need to read the text to discover it. Finally, the prose is lovely. Martin is enthusiastic and lyrical about her plants. The information for growing them is embedded in the charm of her descriptions. I enjoyed her writing on both the level of helpful text and beautiful writing about a subject dear to her. I would not recommend this book for the conventional basic how-to plant guide. But I strongly recommend it as a beautiful addition to a nicely stocked library on plants and gardening for a fresh and helpful guide providing new ideas.

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