

# CREW WATCH

AUGUST 2018

HOW PLANTS CAN HELP US SOME SURPRISING FACTS

GROW A GARDEN ON BOARD SHIP PRACTICAL ADVICE

RECIPES USING YOUR OWN HERBS FOR FOOD AND DRINK

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES THERE ARE 15 TO FIND



BRITANNIA P&I  
TRUSTED SINCE 1855

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

BRITANNIA'S MISSION IS TO BE **THE FINEST P&I CLUB IN THE WORLD.**



In this edition we are encouraging people to cultivate their inner gardener and embrace plants in their environment. This might seem a strange topic for an edition of Crew Watch but many studies have shown that having plants around can help you to feel better. You can read about the health and wellness benefits on page 2 and remember that plants and herbs have been playing a vital role in Asian medicines for thousands of years. Introducing the natural world into the working and living environment can be a simple way to improve the quality of everyday life.

This also ties in with our series on how you can spend your valuable spare time. Planning a garden (even if it is only a small plant in a recycled food tin can in your cabin) can be very rewarding and maintaining it only takes a few minutes a day – if you choose your plants carefully, they practically look after themselves (see our section on page 4 about planting in glass jars or terrariums). Not only can you make a greener ship, you can recycle containers as well!

Many ships have taken this idea further by introducing plants into the communal areas, using larger containers and choosing herbs that can be used in cooking and in drinks – for some healthy recipe ideas have a look on page 5. It is worth asking if there is money in the ship's entertainment budget to buy some simple containers and arrange for some potting compost to be delivered with the ship's stores. Just bear in mind that plants should be kept indoors when calling at ports and always be aware of any local regulations.

Your ship is your home while you are away – having plants around can make you feel better. If this has inspired you to get planting, do send us photos and if you already have green fingers, share your ideas with our readers.

  
CLAIRE MYATT  
Editor



**A MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR** We hope you've enjoyed this issue of Crew Watch.

We are looking for ways to maintain and increase the usefulness, relevance and general interest of the articles. If you have any ideas or comments please send them to: [publications@triley.co.uk](mailto:publications@triley.co.uk)



# GARDENS



Here in London we have one of the most famous flower and garden shows in the world just along the River Thames at Chelsea where there are show gardens and displays of plants and flowers from around the world. We are also lucky enough to have the largest and oldest glass house in the world in Kew Gardens. In Singapore the Gardens by the Bay are truly spectacular, with their imposing towers and vast flower domes where more than 1 million plants can be found. There are amazing gardens all over the world, from the orchid farms of Thailand to the tranquility of the Japanese gardens, where a few simple elements are combined to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony.

These impressive public gardens are hard to copy but we can all benefit from plants in our everyday lives, no matter where we live or how little space we have. The smallest space in a cabin or in the ship's communal areas can be transformed by the addition of a few simple pots and containers, or even a mini glasshouse.

Plants have even been grown in space. NASA has been conducting trials for many years, growing plants and vegetables on board the International Space Station. Not only are the scientists studying whether food can be grown in space, but they have also been looking at the psychological and physical benefits of having plants in your immediate environment. They have shown that plants have stress-reducing effects, particularly desirable for those circling the globe, whether in a space ship or on the high seas.



# HOW PLANTS CAN HELP US

## Plants help us breathe

When you breathe in, oxygen enters the body – when you breathe out, you release carbon dioxide. Plants do the opposite: they absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen, making plants and people great partners when it comes to gasses. Plants help to increase our oxygen levels. But here's an interesting fact: at night, most plants switch to absorbing oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide. However, a few special plants – like orchids, succulents and epiphytes such as moss, lichen and ferns – do the opposite and take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen. This means that using these plants in bedrooms keeps the oxygen flowing at night.

## Plants deter illness

When plants release moisture during photosynthesis the humidity in a room increases and this helps keep respiratory diseases at bay because viruses such as flu do not survive as long in humid conditions. Living with plants in your living space has also been proved to reduce the incidence of dry skin, colds, sore throats and dry coughs.

## Plants clean the air

NASA has spent a lot of time researching air quality in sealed environments and found an improvement in air quality: 'Both plant leaves and roots are utilized in removing trace levels of

toxic vapors from inside tightly sealed buildings. Low levels of chemicals such as carbon monoxide and formaldehyde can be removed from indoor environments by plant leaves alone.'

## Plants boost healing

Studies have shown that putting plants in hospital rooms speeds up the recovery rate of patients. When compared to rooms without plants, patients with plants in their room request less pain medication, have lower heart rates and blood pressure, experience less fatigue and anxiety and are released from hospital sooner – so bringing a plant to a hospital bedside is not just for the decorative effect.

## Plants help you work better

A number of studies have shown that studying or working in the presence of plants can have a positive effect. As with simply being in nature, being around plants improves concentration, memory and productivity. Being 'under the influence of plants' can increase memory retention by up to 20 percent and can also increase productivity 'Keeping ornamental plants in the home and in the workplace increases memory retention and concentration. Work performed under the natural influence of ornamental plants is normally of higher quality and completed with a much higher accuracy rate than work done in environments devoid of nature.'



# HOW CAN YOU HAVE A GARDEN ON BOARD A SHIP?

THERE ARE FOUR BASIC REQUIREMENTS THAT YOU NEED TO CREATE AN INDOOR GARDEN IN ANY SEASON:



## 1) LIGHT

Most plants need at least six hours of good quality light a day – you can tell if it is bright enough by putting your hand in front of the window and if it casts a shadow, the light is good. If not, you can supplement it with artificial light (such as fluorescent tubes) or restrict your plant choice to those that prefer less light.

## 2) WATER

Plants need conditions close to their natural habitats so those that grow in desert areas need less water than bog plants. There are simple clues – if the plant has thick rubbery leaves (such as cacti and succulents) it stores water and needs less frequent watering – those with thin delicate leaves need more.

## 3) TEMPERATURE

You need to choose plants according to the temperature that you have – if the plants are used to having distinct seasons then you can trick them into thinking it's winter by putting them in a cooler place if they need to hibernate. You can experiment to see what works where you are.

## 4) AIR

Plants produce oxygen and filter noxious gasses from the environment via their leaves. To keep plants healthy you need to keep the leaves clean and to keep the air around them moving and moist. You can put them somewhere with good air flow or provide a small fan and place the pots above water – not allowing the roots to sit in water, but allowing the humidity to circulate. Keeping plants in groups creates a mini-environment which also helps them grow.

## CONTAINERS

YOU CAN USE ANY SORT OF CONTAINER FOR YOUR INDOOR GARDEN – OF COURSE THIS WILL DEPEND ON THE AMOUNT OF SPACE AVAILABLE.



If using a window sill, smaller pots will work but choose more compact plants accordingly. You can think about recycling plastic cartons or glass pots or bowls – but never use containers treated with chemicals as these can kill the plants.

Remember to make holes in the bottom and to further improve drainage, cover the base of the pot with stones or broken pottery. Stand the containers on a saucer, tray or in a shallow bowl or dish.

You can be very inventive in your choice of container – tin cans from cooking oil, tins that contained coffee, plastic tubs of margarine – your containers can be varied and colourful. You can grow 'air plants' with small or no roots in bottles strung up in front of windows. Old work boots or rubber boots can be filled with soil and planted – almost anything can be used.

Once you have your containers, decide on what type of soil to use. The best is to use a potting mix – you can easily buy this ready mixed or you can make your own with peat, vermiculite and compost. But if this is hard to get, hardy cactus plants only need some grit to thrive. Give the earth a good soaking of water and choose your area and then you are ready to start planting.

For more ideas on using containers go to: [ow.ly/k5aM30lkNtJ](http://ow.ly/k5aM30lkNtJ)





# WHAT TO PLANT

**THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT THINGS YOU CAN PLANT – YOU CAN GROW FLOWERS FOR DECORATION OR HERBS THAT YOU CAN EAT.**

Flowers such as African violets (Saintpaulia) and Moth orchids (Phalaenopsis) need similar growing conditions – they are simple to grow and maintain and are very colourful and attractive. Peace lilies (Spathiphyllum wallisii) are not only attractive but are one of the best plants to improve air quality.

Cactus plants and succulents come in all shapes and sizes and require direct light but not a lot of water. Other tough and tolerant plants include the snake plant (Sanseveria trifasciata) which is also known as mother-in-law’s tongue or the cast iron plant (Aspidistra elator) – both these are slow growing but incredibly forgiving and can put up with different amounts of light, temperature and water and so are good for those starting out as gardeners.

# EDIBLE PLANTS

**THE EASIEST THINGS TO GROW ARE HERBS IF YOU HAVE A GOOD SUPPLY OF LIGHT.**

They grow very well in containers and have the advantage of looking attractive, often having a lovely smell and are useful in the kitchen.

**Mint:** this can be used to make tea, add flavour to cold drinks and add interest to sweet and savoury dishes. Mint will need regular feeding to grow well but it can survive in a more shady spot which many other herbs cannot. Pick the tips and the plant will keep regenerating.

**Chives:** these are great chopped into a salad or to garnish soups and other savoury dishes – keep it damp and snip off the tops when you need them.

**Vietnamese coriander (cilantro):** more spicy than regular coriander and very useful for cooking – keep it well fed and watered.

**Sage, rosemary and thyme:** all with strong distinctive flavours these are excellent in soups, stocks, pasta and meat sauces. Keep them well drained with not too much water.

For recipe ideas see page 5.



# TERRARIUMS

**THESE GLASS CONTAINERS MAKE UNUSUAL AND DECORATIVE ALTERNATIVES TO POTS AND CONTAINERS. THEY ACT LIKE MINI GLASSHOUSES.**

If the glass container is completely closed with a lid then a small scale water cycle is created – where the moisture from the soil and plants evaporates as the temperature rises inside the terrarium. The water vapour then condenses on the glass walls and falls back onto the soil and plants, providing a constant source of water and preventing the soil from drying out.

Plants that thrive in these conditions are often tropical such as:

Mosses, Orchids, Ferns and Air plants (tillandsia)

The other option is for a terrarium to be open on one side. This type can be used to grow plants that need drier

conditions and more sunlight such as cactus and succulents. To make this type of terrarium you can use any glass container – consider recycling jam jars or glass bowls – you can even use small drinking glasses and choose very small plants. Line the container with pebbles and charcoal to help drainage and use a special mix for cactus which includes sand and grit.



# VIETNAMESE CHICKEN SALAD WITH RICE NOODLES

HERE IS A RECIPE THAT USES SOME OF THE HERBS THAT CAN BE GROWN ON BOARD, MINT AND CORIANDER (OR CILANTRO). YOU CAN ALSO ADD CHILLIES TO THE DRESSING TO INCREASE THE HEAT – THESE ARE ALSO EASY TO GROW IN SMALL POTS ON BOARD. YOU CAN ALSO COOK THIS WHEN AT HOME ON LEAVE AS THE INGREDIENTS SHOULD BE EASY TO BUY ACROSS THE WORLD.

**INGREDIENTS** (enough for 4-6 so increase as needed)

**FOR THE DRESSING:**

3 serrano or jalapeno peppers  
4 cloves garlic  
2 tablespoons rice vinegar  
2 tablespoons brown sugar  
4 tablespoons fish sauce  
6 tablespoons lime juice  
6 tablespoons vegetable oil

**FOR THE SALAD:**

1 lb (500g) skinless chicken breasts  
6 ounces (200g) rice noodles  
4 large carrots, peeled  
8-10 full leaves of green cabbage  
one large handful of each – coriander (cilantro) leaves, mint leaves and chives or spring onions

**INSTRUCTIONS**

**1) DRESSING** Thinly slice the peppers and set aside. Pulse all the remaining dressing ingredients in a food processor (or chop finely and whisk together) until smooth. Stir in the sliced peppers.

**2) CHICKEN** Bring a large pot of water to boil over high heat. When the water reaches a rolling boil, add the chicken breasts, turn heat off, and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Let the chicken cook for 25-30 minutes – while it's cooking, you can prepare the other ingredients. Remove from water, leave to cool slightly, and shred with two forks. Pour a small amount of the prepared dressing on the chicken to give it flavour and set aside or refrigerate until ready to use.



**3) NOODLES** Soak the rice noodles in a large bowl of cold water for 15 minutes or until softened. Heat a small amount of the dressing in a large skillet over medium high heat. Add the drained noodles and stir-fry for 5 minutes, moving them around. Cut through the noodles with kitchen scissors if you want them to be shorter and easier to eat.

**4) VEGETABLES** Cut the carrots into pieces and pulse in a food processor for 10-15 seconds until finely chopped. Shred the cabbage. Mince the cilantro, mint, and green onions.

**5) ASSEMBLY** Toss the chicken, noodles, vegetables, and remaining dressing (to taste) together. Serve immediately.

# DRINKS USING FRESH MINT FROM THE HERB GARDEN

**MINT TEA** – refreshing at any time

This is a very simple way to use any variety of mint to create a soothing caffeine-free drink. You can either tear the mint leaves and put them straight into a cup or mug and pour boiling water over the leaves. Wait for at least 5 minutes to allow the flavours to release. Help by bruising the leaves with the back of a spoon which releases the flavoured oils in the leaves. Although perfect to drink as it is, you can add honey for a sweeter taste if preferred.

**ICED MINT TEA** – perfect for warmer weather

**1)** Place a handful of mint leaves in a tea towel and bruise with a rolling pin. You can use any variety of mint although spearmint or peppermint are considered the most refreshing.

**2)** Add the mint to a pitcher, with the juice of 6 lemons and zest of 3. Add 3 tablespoons of sugar cane syrup or honey to taste.

**3)** Top up with sparkling water or seltzer if available – otherwise use cold water. Mix well and add more sugar cane syrup, to taste.

**4)** Chill in the fridge.



# SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Can you spot 15 differences between these two pictures? The top picture is the original, the one below has had things added and removed.



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