

1/11

# PLANTING STORIES

**Special  
Edition  
For Care  
Workers  
and  
Meeting  
Monstera**

## **Experiment**

**When you have a moment during your break, try this:** choose any plant in the room and sit beside it. Give it your full attention. Look at its shapes and colours as if seeing them for the first time. Touch the leaves gently, breathe in its scent, lean in closer. When your mind wanders (and it will)—simply notice and return to the plant.

**Just five minutes of quiet connection. Worth trying?** Afterwards, jot down or simply reflect: what did you notice?



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# WELCOME

Through the plant experiment from the cover, you've most probably stepped into a space of connection.

## Keep reading to discover more:

- In **PART ONE**, we'll tell you about the Planting Stories Project (pages 2–4)
- In **PART TWO**, we invite you to experience your connection with Monstera (pages 5–17)
- In **PART THREE**, we'll show you how to create a Planting Stories Corner (pages 18–20)



## Part One

Planting Stories – Self-Directed Learning Pathways project is brought to you by KulturNest e.V., from Germany, and Tilia – Association for the Promotion of Culture and Cultural Heritage from Croatia.

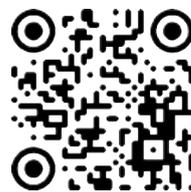
Through research in both countries, we discovered something simple and surprising: when we truly connect with our houseplants, both we and they flourish.

From this, we've created 11 zines filled with simple activities, reflections, and ideas. Each zine invites reader to explore the relationship with plants in

their own way, at their own pace.

The zines can be printed on any ordinary printer and used whenever it feels right—whether there's a single plant or a green corner available. There's no right or wrong way to work with them.

For the full range of Planting Stories educational materials, please scan this



QR code:

We're keen to develop this work further—contact us for updates on future projects.



## Human-Plant Connections May Improve Wellbeing

Research is catching up with what many of us already sense about plants. Horticultural therapy is recognised as a proper, non-pharmacological treatment, which proves that time spent with plants genuinely improves wellbeing, reduces stress, and sharpens thinking. Plants may offer two types of healing—through actively caring for them, and simply through quiet contemplation in their presence.

Our own Planting Stories workshop experiences tell the same story. Participants feel more settled, peaceful, relaxed and connected to plants after spending meaningful time with them.

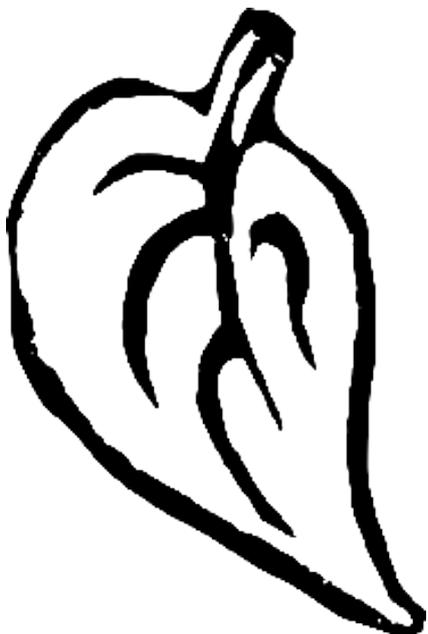


## We Use Metaphors

A metaphor is when we describe one thing by comparing it to another—like saying “life is a journey”. Metaphors help us understand complex experiences by relating them to something familiar. Plants naturally invite this metaphorical thinking. When we observe a plant closely, stories emerge almost effortlessly.

Our zines gently cultivate this metaphorical awareness. This approach allows safe exploration—using symbols and imagery to address feelings without confrontation.

Our zines are invitations. Some are more metaphorical, some more hands-on, some more reflective. Explore them all to find the ones that work best for the people you’re working with.



## Mindful Awareness of Anthropomorphism

As we developed these meaningful plant relationships, we were conscious of avoiding anthropomorphism—projecting human emotions and behaviours onto nature.

Our zines encourage genuine observation and response rather than projection. Instead of assuming a drooping plant feels “sad”, we learn to recognise its need for water or light. This distinction fosters true understanding and honours the nature of the plants.



## Self-Directed Approach

The beauty of these zines lies in their accessibility and self-direction. Self-directed learning puts responsibility for the learning process in the user's hands, by defining what they need, choosing their approach, and evaluating their own outcomes.

Our zines embrace this principle by offering gentle invitations rather than rigid instructions, allowing each person to explore at their own pace and discover what resonates with them best.

Each zine becomes a personal learning journey where people can choose which exercises to try, when to engage, and how deeply to reflect.

# Part TWO

## Your Time with a Plant

### In Search of Monstera

Have a wander through the corridors of your building, have a think about where you might have spotted Monstera before, or perhaps look for monstera in other public spaces in your neighbourhood.

You'll recognise Monstera by its large green leaves with natural holes and splits, thick stems, and roots that sometimes grow out into the air.

Choose one Monstera next to which you can spend quiet and meaningful time. When you're ready, continue with the next pages.



## Preparation

Before you begin, it's worth taking a moment to check in with yourself and the plant.

**Reflect on what would help you be ready for a quiet and meaningful time.**

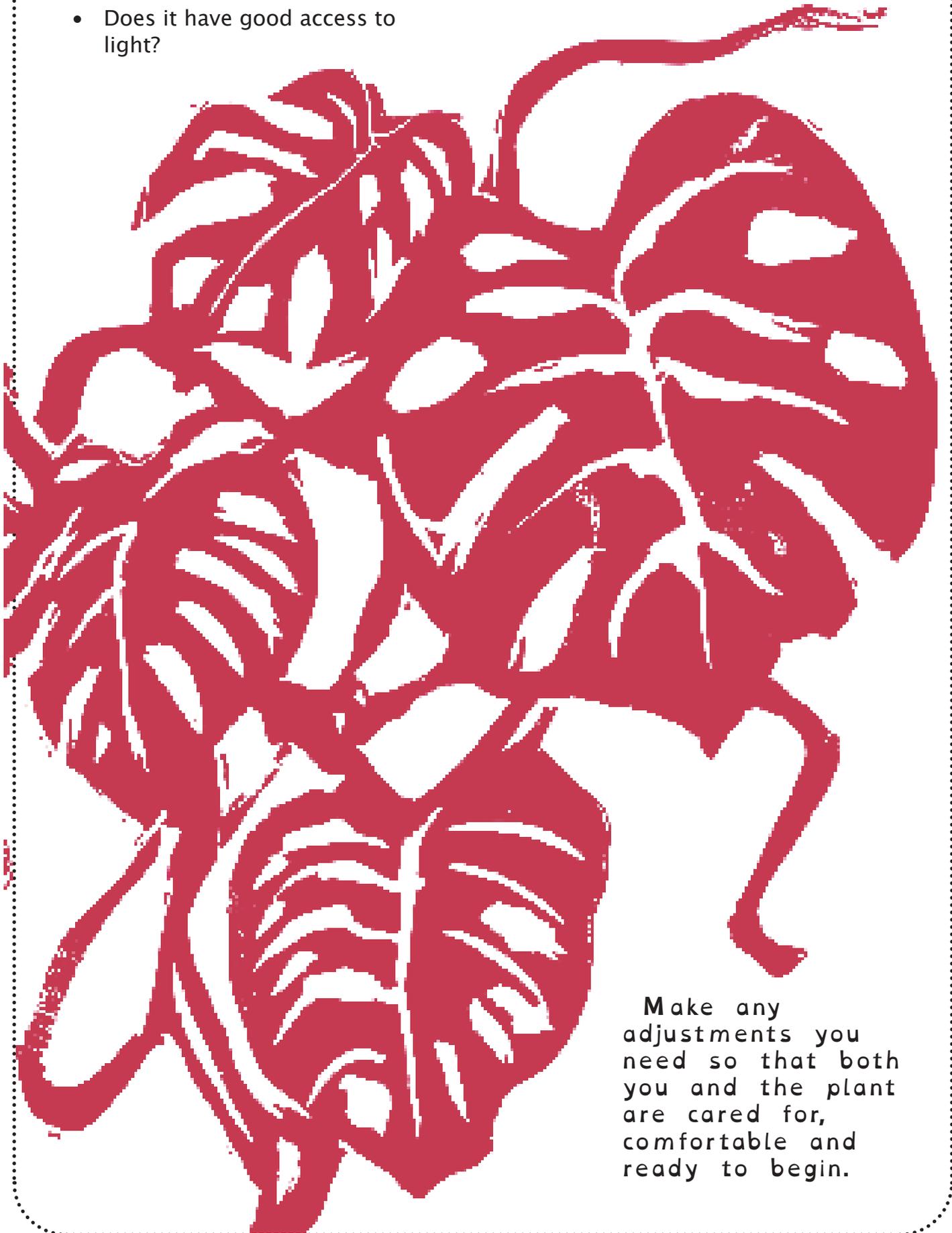
Answer the following questions:

- How long might you need?  
Perhaps book yourself a safe bit of time in your diary when you won't be interrupted.
- What time of day suits you best?
- How can you dress to feel comfortable?
- What sort of lighting feels right?
- How might you create a bit of quiet and focus?
- What materials for writing and drawing would you like? Perhaps pencils, pastels, simple pens, or fine markers?
- What else might you need to be ready for your reflection journey with Monstera?
- Also, take care of the Plant



## How can you take basic care of Monstera's needs?

- Is the soil moist?
- Are the leaves clean?
- Does it have good access to light?



Make any adjustments you need so that both you and the plant are cared for, comfortable and ready to begin.

## Your journey starts here

Sit next to the **Monstera** and read the following story:

**Have you ever wondered what you can see from the top leaf of a **Monstera** in its natural environment?**

Imagine being twenty metres above the ground and seeing the beauty of the rainforest spread out below. Through the holey leaves, you can see layers of leaves beneath. This is actually a light system where each sunbeam reaches the lower parts through these natural gaps in the leaves. Isn't it amazing? The plant developed holes in its own leaves to nurture the lower ones.

**How did the **Monstera** get so high?**

This plant has developed a system of aerial roots: thick, strong roots that work like natural climbing ropes and grips. From up here, the **Monstera** lives a

double life. Whilst it starts as a ground plant, up here it can become independent from the soil below. Its aerial roots absorb nutrients straight from the humid air.

From these heights, you might see something that is quite rare in domesticated **Monstera**—the **Monstera** flowering. The flower, looking like an open white shell, marks the start of a twelve-to-eighteen-month fruit-growing process. This tube-shaped fruit ripens slowly from bottom to top, revealing creamy flesh inside. Not many people know it's edible. When the ripe fruits finally drop to the jungle floor, new seedlings grow from their seeds. Most amazingly, these young plants, unlike other plants, deliberately grow towards the darkest parts of the forest to find tree trunks for climbing. And so the cycle of life starts again for another fifty years.

**Reflection:** What in this story drew your attention? (free writing)

## Let's take a step forward

I wonder if the story from the previous page and the presence of Monstera next to you raises any questions

- about yourself?
- your work?
- your role?
- anything else?

Finish the sentence:

During this reflection time I would like to discover, learn, explore:

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Sometimes writing the prompt is already a milestone for the connection. You may stop here, or give yourself a chance to explore further.



Check which of the following areas is closest to your need?

**Area 1: Roots** (p.10)

**Area 2: Leaves** (p.12)

**Area 3: Fruit** (p.14)

**Area 4: Presence** (p.16)

Choose the area that resonates most strongly with your question and continue your exploration there.



## Roots

Roots are often hidden from our eyes. In the case of the *Monstera*, these underground roots are the very first to grow. They give strength to the tiny seed as it begins to sprout on the dark floor of the rainforest.

As the young *Monstera* finds a tree trunk to climb, it slowly begins its journey upwards. Then, from the little joints along its stem, called nodes, not only do new leaves begin to grow, but special aerial roots appear too. These roots help the plant cling and climb towards the sunlight, but they also take part in nurturing the plant. You might be able to see this happening on the *Monstera* you're next to right now. These aerial roots, unlike the ones underground, have a soft, spongy outer layer which allows them to absorb water and nutrients straight from the air or from damp surfaces nearby. They don't

harm the trees they cling to, they only wrap gently around them. Compared to underground roots, aerial roots can grow much longer, sometimes stretching several metres in search of support.

There are two other fascinating things about *Monstera* roots that are worth noticing.

First, an aerial root can grow all the way down to the soil and turn into an underground root. In the wild, these roots often grow thick and strong, acting as extra legs that help to hold the *Monstera* steady.

Second, in some special conditions—when the air is humid enough and there's plenty of light, the *Monstera* can completely let go of the underground roots, living entirely off the water and nutrients it collects through its aerial roots. It becomes almost an air plant.

## Root Invitation



Take a moment to observe the aerial roots of the Monstera next to you. Notice where they begin, look how they grow out from a node on the stem. Follow the shape of the root as it curves and twists. Gently touch its surface.

### What do you notice?

Look closely at the tip of one of the roots.

### Can you guess where it's heading?

Now, take a step back and observe the aerial roots as a whole.

### What do you notice?

Write down or draw any thoughts, impressions, or feelings that come to you as you explore this living phenomenon.



And if you were to see these roots as a metaphor, how might they relate to your chosen question? If they were to inspire you in how to approach your question, what would that be? Write or draw your thoughts by completing your own imaginary shape of the aerial roots.



**Note:** After this exercise you may explore another area of Monstera or move to the closure of the process on **page 17**.

# Leaves

## Monstera's Nickname

This plant is nicknamed "cheese monstera" because its hole-filled leaves resemble Swiss cheese. But these holes aren't just for show, they serve a purpose. Monstera comes from dense rainforests where sunlight is precious. The holes let light pass through to younger leaves below and help the plant withstand heavy rain and strong winds. A clever survival strategy.

## How the Leaves Open

Have you ever watched a Monstera leaf unfurl? You may spot a new growth on the Monstera next to you, at first, tightly rolled like a green scroll. Then, at just the right moment, it slowly unfurls in a majestic way. Interestingly, Monstera can delay opening a new leaf if conditions aren't quite right, to conserve energy.

## Size of Leaves

How does Monstera "know" how big to make a leaf? It's a mix of genetics and environment. The older and healthier the plant, the bigger its leaves. Leaf size depends on light, water, nutrients, age, and space. Smaller, heart-shaped leaves without holes often belong to young plants or form when light or nutrients are scarce.

Monstera seems to "calculate" the ideal leaf size, balancing energy cost with sunlight capture.

## Leaf invitation



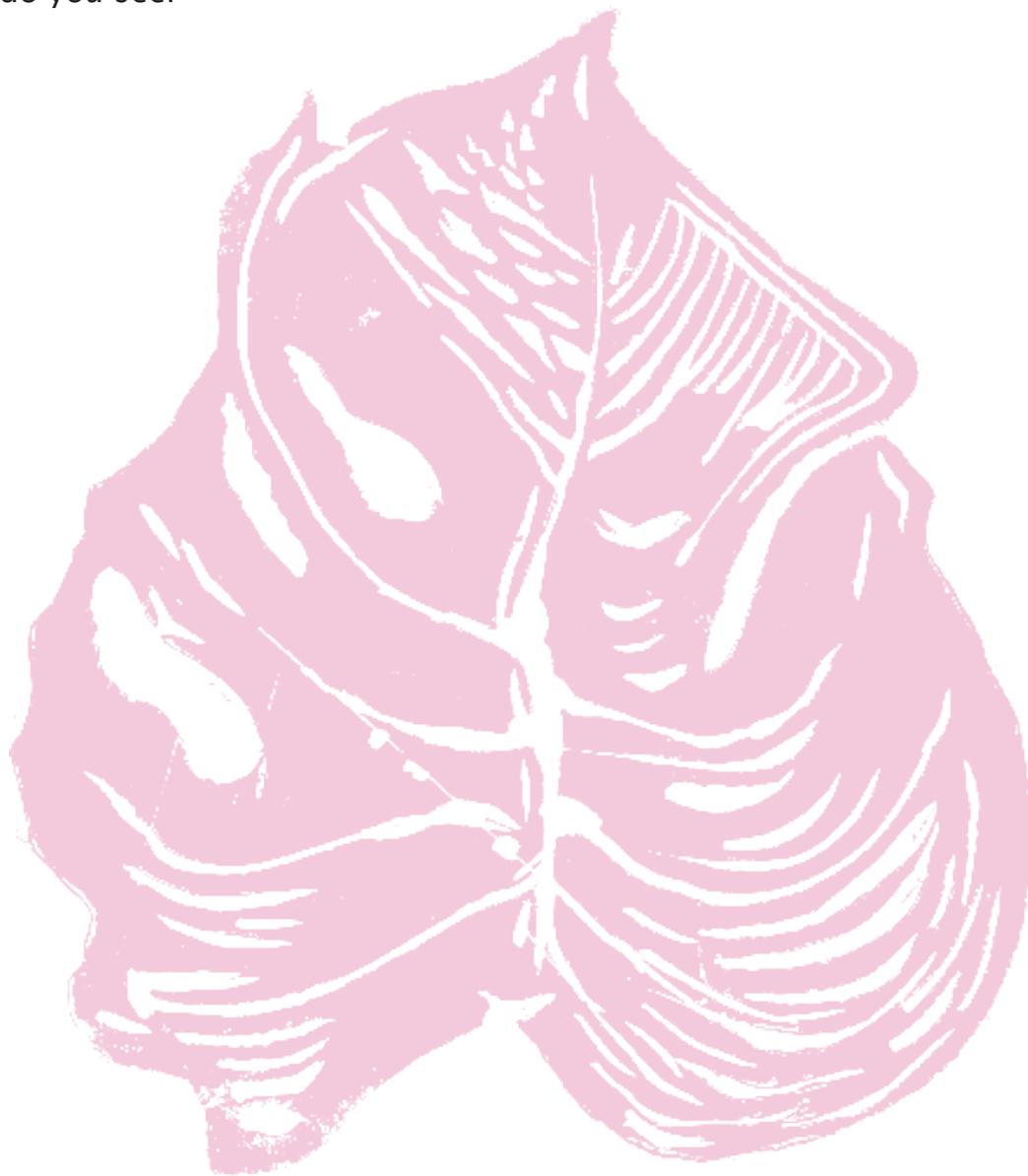
### Observe

I wonder what might happen if you looked very closely at this leaf. Imagine studying it as if it were a puzzle, a clue to something hidden. Follow its veins, notice the edges, and look at the difference in colour between the blade and the veins. Peer through the holes. What do you see?

### Invitation

I wonder what this leaf might symbolise for you. How could it connect to your own question?

Draw or write the inside of the Monstera leaf in whatever way feels right to you at this moment.



**Note:** After this exercise you may explore another area of Monstera or move to the closure of the process on [page 17](#).

## Fruit

Your *Monstera* is most likely growing in a pot. If you ever come across one "in the wild", you're probably in a glasshouse, or perhaps lucky enough to be in a real rainforest :).

Imagine it there, in its natural home, where once a year the *Monstera* blooms. Tiny, creamy-white flowers appear, gathered tightly together on a spadix, and wrapped in a large, fleshy, cream-coloured sheath. From a distance it looks like one single, elegant flower, though inside are hidden dozens of tiny blossoms.

When the flower is pollinated, small fruits begin to form. The process

of ripening is very slow, up to twelve months. A mature fruit looks like a large pine cone, or like a green cob of corn. Inside its sweet flesh are the seeds, waiting for the chance to fall onto the soil below and grow into a new *Monstera*.

In the rainforest, the task of spreading these seeds is taken on by its "sweet-toothed" neighbours: monkeys such as capuchins, bright parrots and toucans, and countless insects.

And here's a little surprise: the fruit of the *Monstera* is edible!



# Fruit invitation



Take a moment to look closely at the Monstera in front of you.

I wonder if it would be possible to take an imaginary journey. If you could close your eyes and imagine that this plant begins to bloom, and then fruit starts to form and ripen.

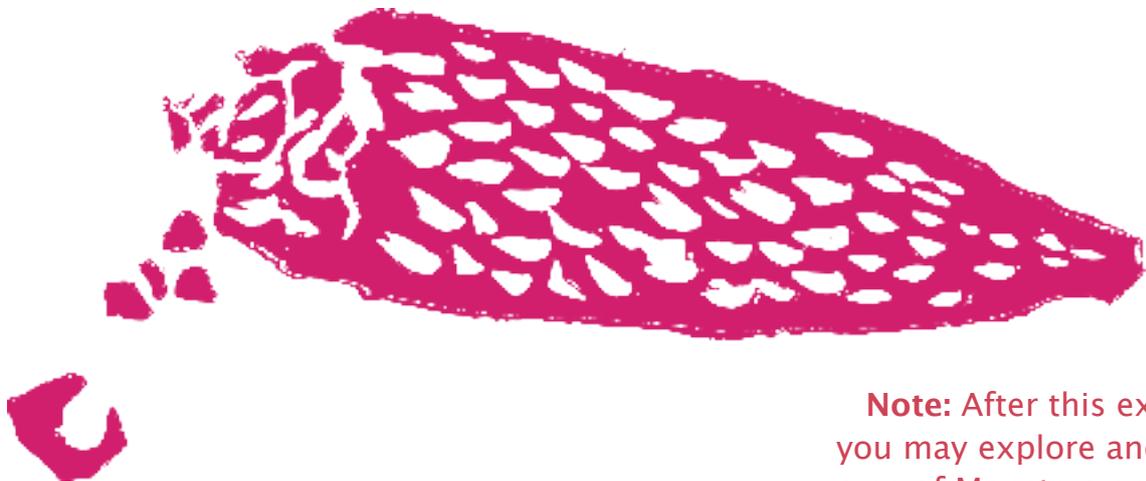
Take a few moments for it.

When you open your eyes, draw or describe what you saw in your imagination.

Whilst drawing or describing, observe what other thoughts are coming.

**How does this story relate to your main question, the intention of this journey?**

Four sets of horizontal dotted lines for writing, arranged in two columns of two lines each.



**Note:** After this exercise you may explore another area of Monstera or move to the closure of the process on **page 17**.

## Presence and connection

Sometimes the greatest wisdom comes from quiet observation. Sit with the monstera's presence and see what emerges naturally.

**Note:** After this exercise you may explore another area of Monstera or move to the closure of the process on **page 17**.

## Ending card



If you're on this page, it seems you are at the end of your discovery journey with Monstera for today.

Caring for yourself after this process, think about what you could do to complete this experience right now.

- Maybe write a final reflection?
- Maybe drink a cup of tea?
- Maybe something entirely else ?

Thank you for this moment of deeper connection.

Note down a thought, word, or maybe a symbol that you can cut out from this page and carry with you in your wallet.

### Breathing Exercise

You could also do the three breaths exercise.

Straighten your spine, sit straight, or stand.

**1st breath** – Inhale, lift the chest, and exhale strongly.

**2nd breath** – Deeper inhale, lift the belly, and exhale with sound or with a sigh.

**3rd breath** – Inhale, hold the air for 3 seconds, and slowly release with a slight smile on your face and a gentle sound.



# Part THREE HOW TO CREATE PLANTING STORIES CORNER?

## How to Make the Zines

### How to print

Each zine is printable in A4 format. Go to our website, choose your language—we have zines in English, German, and Croatian—download the chosen PDF, and print it. You can print in black and white or colour. Try printing one first to check how it looks, then adjust the settings according to your preferences.

### How to fold

Most zines are printed A4 size, except Peace Lily, which folds to A5. You can connect the pages by punching holes along the spine with a hole punch and joining the pages with a decorative cord or string. You can also staple them. Maybe you'll come up with an entirely different way.

### What kind of paper to use

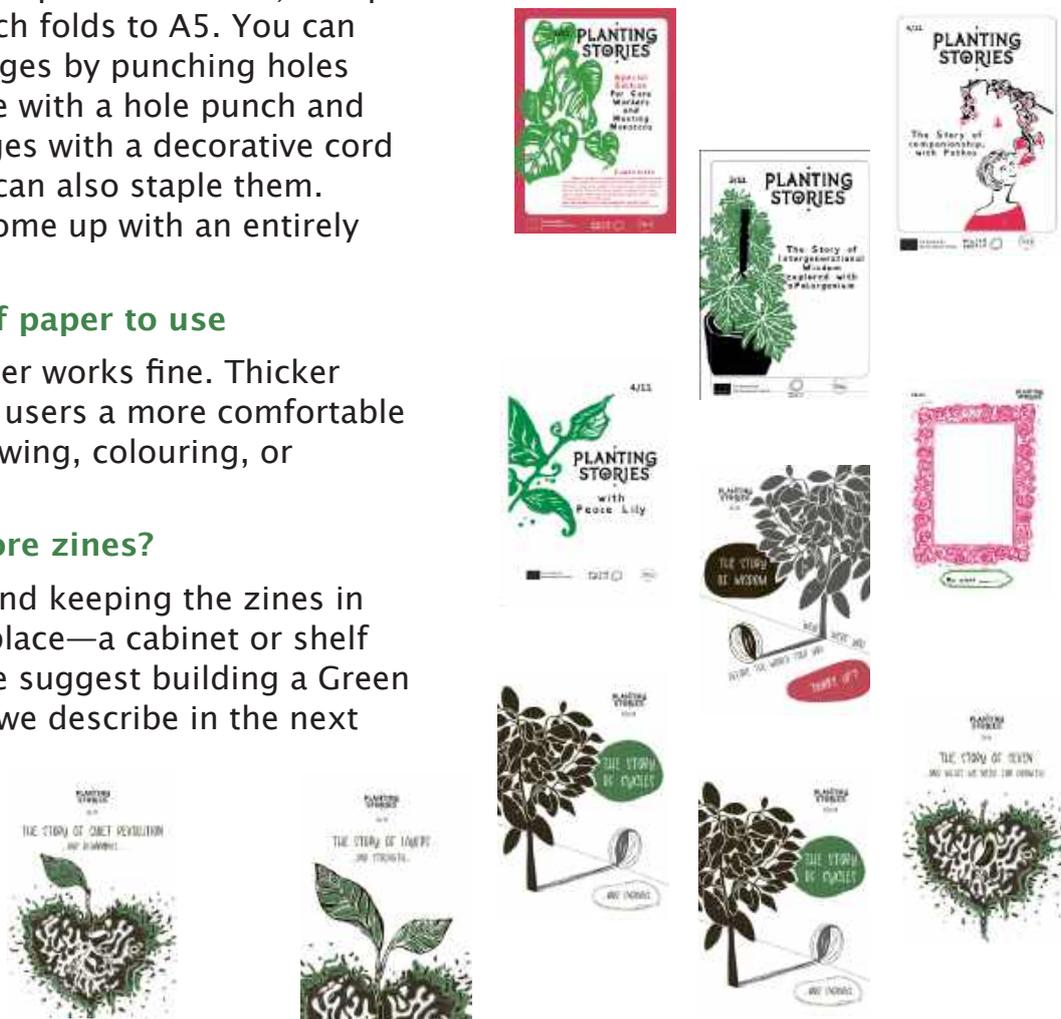
Ordinary paper works fine. Thicker paper will give users a more comfortable surface for drawing, colouring, or painting.

### Where to store zines?

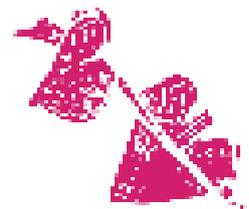
We recommend keeping the zines in an accessible place—a cabinet or shelf near plants. We suggest building a Green Corner, which we describe in the next chapter.

### A Note About the Illustrations:

The illustrations in our zines are made by hand using the relief printing technique of linocut. We wanted the zines to have a handmade character, not a digital one. We encourage you to create a small library of zines—we have a feeling that their presence alone can be an interesting inspiration.



## Green Corner with Planting Stories:



In the place where you are a Green Corner would provide opportunity for plants and people to meeting in a different, much deeper way.

### Where Could This Corner Be?

Perhaps it'll be a bright spot by the window, or maybe a quiet place in your corridor that's waiting to be transformed? If there's not enough natural light, special grow LED lamps can make up for the missing sunshine, especially during winter months. Choose somewhere away from hot radiators and draughts—plants, just like people, need good, humid air to thrive.

### How Might You Kit Out Such a Place?

Picture a soft armchair placed right in the heart of this greenery, inviting people to pause amongst the plants. Arrange plants according to what they prefer—those that love sunshine placed closer to the light, shade-loving ones tucked further back, creating a natural mix of colours and shapes. Plant stands at different heights will let every person—whether they're in a wheelchair or standing—touch the leaves. Climbing plants growing up wooden trellises will create a living wall, whilst a soft rug underfoot and a blanket will make the whole space feel cosy.

Instead of regular soil, use mineral substrate (Zeolite or similar)—its water-holding capacity is much better, it lets more oxygen reach the roots, there's no need for frequent refilling, and it reduces

the possibility of soil-bound pests.

Imagine each plant in your corner getting its own little label with its name and what it needs. A watering journal, watering cans with measurements, and perhaps even a drip system might support the plants. Also, one steady person to monitor the watering would be highly recommended.

Establish a caring routine: dusting the leaves, misting, visual inspection (with a magnifying glass), removing dead and yellowing leaves. It would be great to have a "dirty" Green Corner too—with a table for transplanting where the more active caretakers could do the repotting, multiplying, and other fun stuff.

### Where are the Planting Stories Zines?

In front of this Green Corner, there'll be a small cabinet with printed editions of Planting Stories zines—each one an invitation to journey within oneself, to discover one's own story.



# Choosing plants for your Planting Stories Green Corner



Imagine the bigger plants behind the chair, a “Monstera Deliciosa” spreads its distinctive split leaves. A bird of paradise can stand majestically to one side.

Snake plants stand tall with their architectural leaves, not demanding so much attention yet always quietly elegant. A glossy ZZ plant (Zamioculcas zamiifolia) catches light in the corner.

Flowing from a nearby stand, pothos trails downward. A spider plant cascades from above, occasionally gifting tiny plantlets.

At varying heights around your chair, peace lilies offer elegant white blooms. Rubber trees provide substantial, touchable leaves that invite gentle stroking. Small succulents dot side tables, virtually impossible to overwater. Aloe vera sits within reach, both beautiful and healing. Pots of basil or mint release lovely scents when brushed past, connecting the corner to memories of cooking and gardens.

From seed to story – the avocado:

Pop an avocado pit in a water-filled jar with toothpicks and residents can check daily for progress. Within weeks, roots appear through the clear glass, followed by a green shoot reaching skyward. After a few months, glossy leaves unfurl and the plant graduates to soil with a repotting ceremony. Your avocado grows into a permanent corner resident.



## Remember:

Choose plants for your light conditions. Consider future growth as your small Monstera will eventually need support, whilst snake plants slowly multiply. Your green corner isn't about

perfect arrangements. It's about creating a living space where nature welcomes people, where growth happens naturally, and where every moment tells a story of care, life cycles and quiet miracles.

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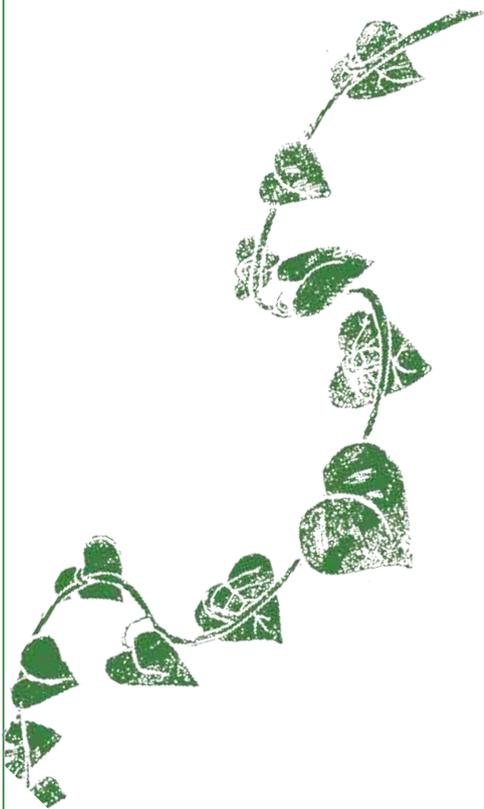
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**Then have a chat about it with someone from your team, your colleagues, boss, or a friend.**

Let us know - we'd love to tell the world about it through our social media and show how beautifully caring for people can be combined with loving plants.

**Need help? We would be delighted to offer consultation if you would like to set up a green corner. Please do get in touch.**

# THANK YOU FOR TAKING THIS JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND CONNECTION

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Check for other resources at:  
[https://www.kulturnest.org/  
socio-cultural/planting-stories](https://www.kulturnest.org/socio-cultural/planting-stories)  
or [udruga-tilia.hr/  
plantingstories](http://udruga-tilia.hr/plantingstories)



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