

#HOUSEPLANTS

Does Your Plant Need a Nanny?

Because sometimes, even your monstera needs a little extra love.



In today's world of aesthetic homes, urban jungles, and self-care Sundays, houseplants have grown from humble greens to cherished members of the household. But let's be honest, owning plants isn't always as easy as those Pinterest-perfect pictures make it look. Between overwatering, forgotten sun exposure, unexpected pests, and vacations, your leafy companions might be silently screaming for help. That's where the idea of a 'plant nanny' comes in.

Yes, you heard that right. A plant nanny, whether a person, gadget, or service, could be just what your green buddy needs.



What Is a Plant Nanny?

At its core, a plant nanny is someone (or something) that helps keep your plants healthy when you're not around or when you're not exactly a green thumb. This could mean a friend or neighbour checking in while you're on vacation, a self-watering device, or even professional plant care services now trending in many urban

cities. Plant-sitting isn't just for the forgetful, it's a real necessity for people with busy schedules, frequent travel plans, or simply too many houseplants to manage alone. In fact, many plant parents admit that after the initial excitement, they struggle with consistency, and plants don't forgive negligence easily.

Signs Your Plant Might Need a Nanny

- So, how do you know your plant needs extra support?
- Wilting or yellowing leaves despite your efforts.
- Dry or soggy soil because watering isn't an exact science.
- Frequent pest issues that seem to keep coming back.
- You travel often, and your plants look miserable every time you return.
- You have a collection of high-maintenance plants that require specific care.
- If any of these hit home, a little help could go a long way.

Options for Plant Care

1. **Human Nannies:** Ask a friend, roommate, or plant-loving neighbour to care for your green gang when you're away. Leave clear instructions: how much to water, what not to touch, and where the sun hits best.
2. **Self-Watering Tools:** From ceramic spikes to high-tech moisture sensors connected to your phone,

there's a wide market for automated watering tools. These are perfect for low-maintenance plants and forgetful owners.

3. **Professional Services:** Believe it or not, some plant care companies now offer plant-sitting and maintenance services. They'll trim, water, and even repot your babies for a fee.

It's Not Just About Survival

Having a plant nanny isn't about pampering. It's about ensuring that your plants thrive, not just survive. A well-cared-for plant rewards you with cleaner air, a calm vibe, and often, a sense of accomplishment. So, does

your plant need a nanny? If your ficus is looking droopy or your succulents are silently judging you, it might be time to admit: yes, it does. After all, healthy plants, like pets, need attention, care, and sometimes, a helping hand.



Shah Jahan riding with his son, by Manohar, 1615.



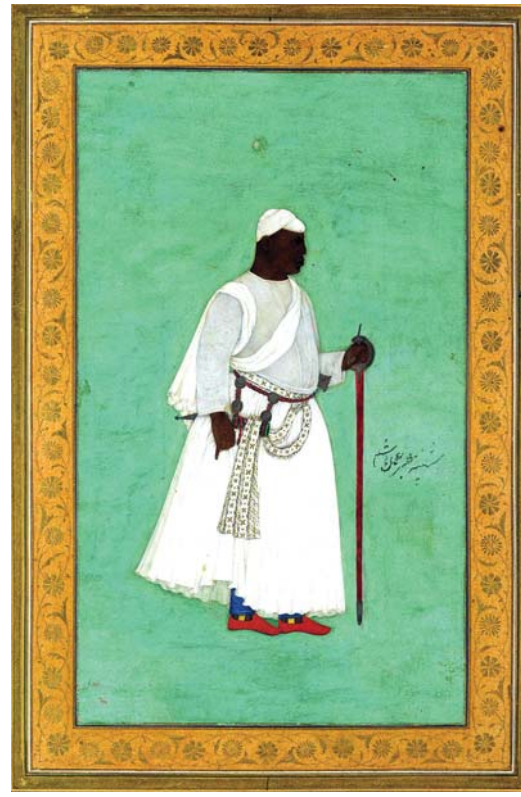
Portrait of Asaf Khan by Bichitr.



Portrait of Sultan Mohammad Qutb Shah of Golkonda, by Hashim, 1620.



Pendant, nephrite jade set with rubies and emeralds in gold.



Portrait of Malik Ambar, by Hashim, 1620.



Portrait of Emperor Alamgir.



Pen box and utensils, white nephrite jade, Albert museum London.

Hate And Jealousy A Story In Art

PART:4



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Senior Journalist & Wildlife Enthusiast

Nephrite jade was probably still a rare commodity in the empire at this period, its availability was dependant upon whether or not the narrow trade routes from Khotan, across Tibet and through Kashmir, were open. However, the material quickly began to be used in typically innovative fashion by the royal master craftsmen. Wine cups of increasingly complex form were made, and jade artefacts were also inlaid with precious stones. A jade pendant in our collections, set with rubies and emeralds of very high quality in gold, was very probably made in the imperial workshops.

Textiles of Jahangir's reign are particularly rare, but a unique and extremely splendid satin coat embroidered all over with birds and animals in a flower-strewn rocky

landscape must have been made for a leading individual at court. Many details, including some of the animals and plant forms are replicated in the borders of contemporary paintings and on metalwork, underlining a fundamental difference between artistic production in the Mughal empire and in Europe, as in Iran, Central Asia and the rest of the subcontinent, no distinction is made between so-called 'fine' and 'decorative' art.

Shah Jahan

Jahangir died in 1627 and after a short but violent interval when rivals competed for the throne, his son Shah Jahan became emperor in 1628. Shah Jahan had rebelled against his father, as Jahangir as a prince had rebelled against Akbar, and had been estranged from 1621 onwards. Some of this time was spent in the Deccan, where the prince tried to form alliances with the traditional enemies of the Mughal state. Sensitive observed portraits of two men that were considered enemies to the Mughal state can only have been done by an eye witness, and demonstrate that artists must have accompanied Shah Jahan.

Malik Ambar was born in Ethiopia in about 1549 and sold into



slavery. He was eventually bought by a leading member of the court of Nizam Shah, ruler of Ahmadnagar, one of the fragile sultanates of the Deccan. The slave became a soldier, and eventually a commander of the army which fought against Akbar's forces. By 1600, he was so powerful that he effectively ruled Ahmadnagar until his death in 1626.

Sultan Muhammad Qutb Shah ruled nearby Golkonda and was renowned for his patronage of the arts. Hashem's painting shows the distinctively different weapons and jewellery worn by the ruler compared with Mughal fashions at the time.

After Shah Jahan's accession, paintings inherited from his father were combined in sumptuous albums with newly commissioned paintings. Decorated panels of calligraphy by great Iranian masters were pasted to the back of each painting, and floral borders were added to each side of the folio, creating a sense of unity throughout the albums.

Shah Jahan seems to have made a conscious attempt to obliterate all physical record of his father. Structures built by order of Jahangir in the royal cities of Agra and Lahore were replaced with those in a new style, characterised by profusely carved or inlaid floral decoration. More subtle slights are apparent in paintings. In a representation of the three emperors that has a companion piece, now in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin, Akbar hands the imperial crown not to his actual successor

but to Shah Jahan. Jahangir is ignored.

More surprisingly, in another painting, Shah Jahan's head replaces that of his father, and the original depiction of himself as Crown Prince, seen following the emperor, has been replaced by the head of his own son, Dara Shikoh. All other elements of the painting by Manohar remain unchanged. The artist of the replacement heads, Murar, signed his work in minute inscriptions immediately behind Shah Jahan, and underneath the Crown Prince's left hand.

Shah Jahan inherited the volumes of the

combined libraries of Akbar and Jahangir, but on the basis of what has survived, his interest in the art of the book seems to have been

much less than that of his father, though a contemporary historian notes that he inspected the work of the artists every day. Some tradi-



Shahjahan's cup, white nephrite jade, Albert museum London.

#THE ARTS



Hunting coat, embroidered satin, 1610-25.



Hunting coat.



The most remarkable jade vessel known to have been made for Shah Jahan is a wine cup of white nephrite jade. It is inscribed with a date that converts to 1657, the last year of his reign, and his title, 'Lord of the Second Conjunction.' This makes reference to his Timurid ancestor. Timur styled himself Lord of the Conjunction, signifying his birth at the auspicious planetary conjunction of Jupiter and Mars.

Agra and Lahore that were transformed with new buildings decorated with coloured stone inlays, and the new city called Shahjahanabad that was built in Delhi between 1639 and 1648. White marble from the mines of Makrana, in Rajasthan, was used prolifically in Agra and Delhi, carved in low relief or inlaid with semi-precious stones in a new Mughal style, inspired by imported Florentine panels inlaid with pietre dure. The most common designs were rows of flowering plants, which now became the defining style of the arts of Shah Jahan's reign, seen in every medium from architecture and textiles to metalwork and the art of the book.

In Lahore and Srinagar, where buildings were constructed of brick or wood, new buildings were embellished with colourful tile revetments. Walled gardens were laid out in the same cities, their gateways also decorated with polychrome tiles. Tile revetments decorated the mansions, mosques and tombs built by nobles in Lahore, and these had floral motifs, Persian verses or religious inscription in Arabic, depending on the context. Shah Jahan spent a certain amount of time with his family in the city of Burhanpur in the Deccan and it was here that his beloved wife, Arjumand Banu Begum, who had the title 'Mumtaz Mahal,' died in 1631 giving birth to their fourteenth child. Her body was moved to Agra, where Shah Jahan ordered a tomb to be built for her. The Taj Mahal was built from white marble, with red sandstone gateways. The low walls enclosing the cenotaph of his wife, and after

his death, his own were also inlaid or carved with rows of flowering plants. Sa'ida-ye Gilani continued as Superintendent of the Goldsmiths under Shah Jahan, and almost certainly continued to make vessels and other artefacts from jade. Jade and rock crystal were used more prolifically than ever before. Wine cups and bowls, boxes, and hilts for daggers and swords were made of both materials, and were sometimes also set with precious stones in gold.

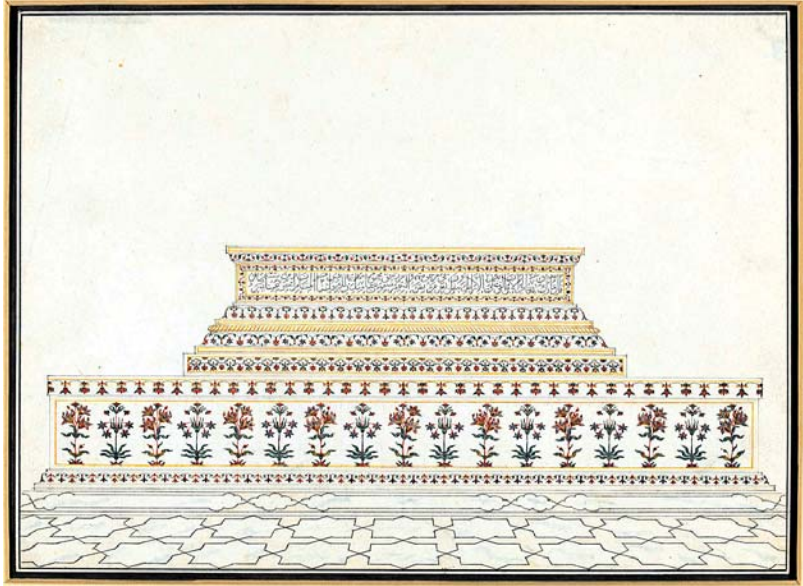
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'Alamgir' in 1658. All but one of his brothers were put to death by the ruthless new emperor to eliminate all future threats to his rule. He imprisoned his father in the fort at Agra, from where Shah Jahan could see the tomb of his wife in which he would also be buried when he died in 1666.

Alamgir ruled until 1707, and extended the Mughal empire to its greatest size. This involved long campaigns to subdue the sultanates of the Deccan, which were ultimately successful. However, years of almost constant warfare drained the wealth of the empire and Alamgir's absence from the northern cities for nearly three decades left them in economic decline. After his death, the empire began slowly but irreversibly to break up, with regional governors becoming virtually independent and new rulers making land grabs. Power drained away from the Mughal emperors in favour of regional courts. Many of them followed artistic and architectural conventions established by Shah Jahan, though necessarily on a much reduced scale. None could match the splendour of the Mughal court at its wealthiest.

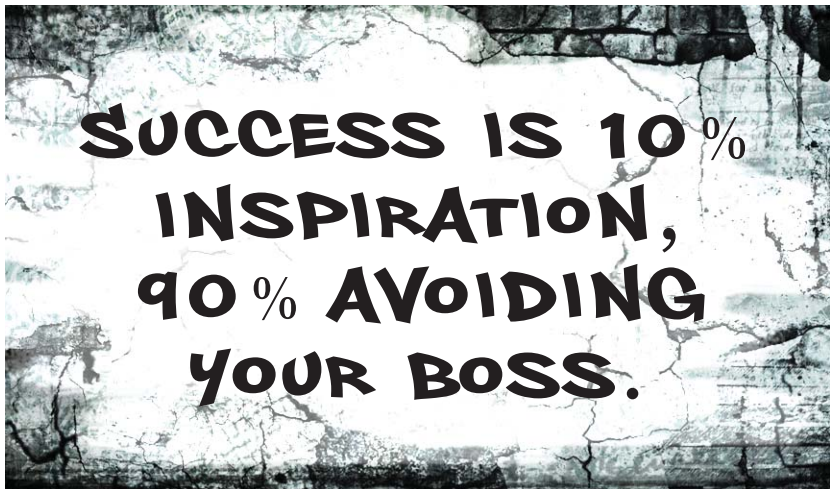
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Cenotaph of Mumtaz Mahal in the Taj Mahal at Agra.

THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman