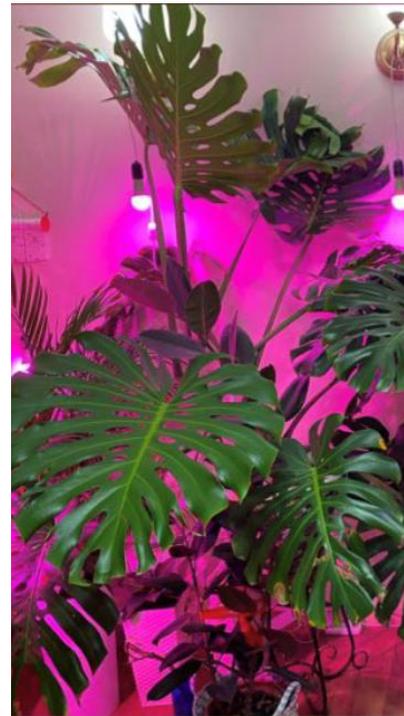


***Monstera Deliciosa*, by Vicki Williams (A Fun Houseplant!)**

There is an inherent jealousy that seethes quietly, raising its heckles vividly across social media forums, gardeners' coffee groups, which signifies a divide between those in different zones. Lines are drawn, tips are shared, and cuttings with nodes (*the start of air roots*) and *rooted cuttings* raise eye watering prices within marketplaces. The root (pun intended) of this envy lies solely at the soil level of *Monstera deliciosa*, commonly known as the Swiss Cheese Plant, varying in type including *adansonii*, *borsigiana*, *deliciosa*, *albo variegata* and *dubia*.

Missouri Botanical Gardens describe this beauty as: *Monstera deliciosa*, commonly called split-leaf philodendron, is native to Central America. It is a climbing, evergreen perennial vine that is perhaps most noted for its large, perforated leaves on thick plant stems and its long cord-like aerial roots.



My passion for this plant family stems (sorry – couldn't resist) from watching the development of the mature adult *deliciosa* plant. The unfurling of the fenestrated adult leaves is well worth the wait, as fans of monstera's will attest. I have experimented with alternating ways of propagation using water rooting, *leca** and earlier soil potting. (*For those of you unfamiliar with *leca*, it is bought in bags as little clay balls and is used for semi/passive hydroponics, as an alternative to planting in soil. It can work well with rooting many types of house plants, but I had to take a deep breath and summon my courage to deviate from the 'norm' of soil potting.)

Whilst many rave about the use of *leca*, I have had much more success with simple cleanly cutting, using rooting hormone powder and adding the cutting direct to water and playing a very patient waiting game of 'await the root growth'. This, I have found, can be sped up with the consistent use of pink/blue grow lights and occasional water changes – and yes, I have tried tap, rain, and mineral water, with the best success from simply using tap water left to stand overnight.

Monstera's are dramatic show pieces within the home and, if you're lucky enough, outside of the home too. In captivity, the adult plants require little maintenance, save watering, feeding and light – and the odd shower to clean of leaves. Water seeking aerial roots can be tucked back into the pot or into water, depending upon preference.

The most sought-after variation of monstera is that of the variegated *monstera deliciosa*. As the leaves have more white, they need to work harder to photosynthesize. I have found greater success with artificial pink light, rather than natural light in east facing windows due to the odd case of sunburn through glass. It is important to note that the violet blue lights used do not heat the atmosphere around the plant.

Photo Credit: Vicki Williams

References:

<http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org>
www.gardeners.com
www.greeneryunlimited.com