

I2: User Research

Project Description

For our project, we are interested in assisting plant growers, specifically home growers in their gardening endeavors. We define home growers as people who garden or tend to plants mainly as a hobby. We expect to find our users in a variety of different contexts, such as indoor plant owners, backyard gardeners, P-Patch owners, balcony gardeners, and other groups as well.

User Interview:

Interview Questions:

1. What got you initially interested into plants?
2. How did you start learning about plant care?
3. What type of plants do you own? More specifically, are they indoor or outdoor plants? (Flowering, trees, food, ask about different categories)
4. Tell me about your general routine for plant care. (Seasonally, weekend/weekday)
5. What comes to your mind when you first see your plants in the morning? Emotions, thoughts, future ideas?
6. How much time do you spend on average on maintenance for your plants per week?
7. Tell me some of your 'gardening-gone-wrong' stories or any stories?
8. How would you describe the benefits of gardening?
9. What does gardening means to you?
10. What are your [current/realistic] goals for your garden?
11. With unlimited resources and time, what would be your ideal garden?
12. How long have you owned plants?
13. How difficult would you describe it is to take care of your plants?
14. Where do you go shopping for materials, supplies, and plants for your gardening endeavors?
15. Do you have any memorable stories regarding your plants?
16. What was your biggest frustration starting out gardening/planting?
17. What advice would you give a beginner, or someone interested in keeping plants?
18. Do you have any other information or stories that you would like to share?

User Responses:

Q: So how are you doing today?

A: Good!

Q: What got you initially interested into plants?

A: Ever since I was young my mom was really into gardening, until recently she stopped doing it cause she's older and it takes a lot of time for her. As she faded out of the gardening phase, I boomed and got really interested in it, specifically, coming to college and having all these resources.

Q: How did you start learning about plant care?

A: I started learning plant care from my mom, which was watering at the time. Coming to college is when I first learned what propagation¹ was and having my own plants that I took care of.

Q: What type of plants do you own? More specifically, are they indoor or outdoor plants?

A: I like broad leafed viny plants because they grow well and are very hardy. Aside from my vines, which are indoor, I also grow succulents, which are also indoor plants. This year I started getting into Bonsai, and you know, I took the trees from outside. So technically they're outdoor plants but I'm planting them indoor. I also am growing some succulents outdoor that are doing well, as well as some native flowers too.

Q: Can you tell me more about your general routine for your plant care?

A: When I was a budding plant person my mom started getting really annoyed because I would bring all my plants home because they were too much to care for in the dorms. She got kind of annoyed of all the work she had to do, taking care of my plants and watering them. The ones that I have in my dorm don't really take a lot of care. Some of the smaller plants I water once a week. Succulents and the vine plants I probably water once every two weeks, but I like to propagate them, so I'll just take snipping's off, and then I'll put it in water and then I'll repot them. My room gets dirty because there's soil everywhere because of my plants, but I vacuum it up. I also have a whole bunch of plant stuff in my room, like empty pots, digging tools, and soil.

Q: What comes to your mind when you first see your plants in the morning? Like, when you see them, does like anything come to your mind, emotions, thoughts, future goals?

A: They make me happy! I haven't really thought about the philosophy behind plant care and why it makes me happy and fulfilled, but it does! I think just the aspect of caring for something, and having the responsibility is kind of fun.

Q: How much time do you spend on average on maintenance for your plants per week?

A: I feel I like it's not that much, but it probably is. I think I spend a lot of time just looking at them, like I'll take them down from the window and just see how they're doing, which I guess is plant care. I think I spend around an hour each week.

Q: Do you have any gardening gone wrong stories? Or any other interesting stories?

A: Oh, there was that beautiful vine plant I had. It was a split leaf philodendron, and if you think about it, it had those cool looking tropical leaves that are split, you know? It was a beautiful plant, and when I put it outside, after a couple days it just died. It made me so sad. I think a lot of my plants have died, I think it's because I overwater them. I also have some plants in my office on west campus. It's an environmental club, and I put a bunch of my plants there because it's like that

¹ Propagation is the act of breeding a specimen of plant or animals from the parent stock.

perfect amount of time where I'm not too concerned about them, so I don't overwater them. I maybe only look at them once a week, and that's when I water them. They're doing really well.

Q: How would you describe the benefits of gardening?

A: I don't really know - I think it's exciting and it gets your mind off stress and stuff. It's like taking care of a puppy, except it doesn't move!

Q: What are your realistic goals for gardening? Like right now, currently.

A: I have this beautiful plant called a Wandering Jew, it's a vibrant purple plant, with leaves that have two fat silver stripes on them. It's so cool, I am in love with that plant! I cut off a bit for my friend, so she could hopefully get it going at her place. She accidentally cut off the top, which was kind of sad, because it's an awesome plant. Recently I cut off a chunk from my mother plant and then replanted it, so I have two of them. They're growing very well, and I want to cut off another bit and start growing that as well. I hope to create a dense root system and hopefully it'll grow wildly so I can cut off pieces for other people.

Q: With unlimited resources and time, what would be your ideal garden?

A: I would want a whole bunch of garden beds with vegetables. I'd also want an herb patch area. I want to grow potatoes, all in different colors. I also want to grow carrots, and flowers around my yard. I also want a compost pile, with a tool shed, and a cool little pond. I want a water structure - I love water, and that's what I'm studying in my academics. I also want a rain barrel to catch all the rain, so I don't have to use fresh water to water my plants and I can just use a hose. I also want a greenhouse, so I can put all my viny plants and succulents inside it.

Q: How difficult would you describe it to take care of your plants?

A: Not difficult at all. I do a lot more than what is needed, but it's pretty easy.

Q: Where do you go shopping for materials, supplies, and plants for your gardening materials?

A: Sometimes I randomly go to hardware and grocery stores, I'll just wander over to the gardening section and buy something I catch my eyes on. I don't do that usually since I'm usually not in those places. I get my soil from my office because we have a ton of soil, and I get my digging tools from my garden at home since my mom has a whole bunch so it's fine. I also get my pots from the office since they have a whole bunch of pot. Since I'm cheap I like propagating as well.

Q: Do you have any memorable stories from your plants?

A: There was a green viny plant I had freshmen year. It's been doing pretty well, and in sophomore year I brought it to my dorm, because it got way too big. Eventually I just took it home, where hopefully it's being taken care of. I think it's my favorite plant though, it's my favorite color and favorite species.

Q: What was your biggest frustration starting out as a gardener?

A: Plants dying, especially when I didn't know why. I can now speculate it was due to overwatering because that's what it usually is. I never actually looked up how much to water each different species. I would just water them when the soil was dry.

Q: What advice would you give to a beginner or someone interested in keeping plants?

A: I think people mainly have a problem with not consistently watering their plants. It's probably due to a lack of time to take care of them. If you're really into it, you don't even need to buy plants, you can just propagate!

Q: Do you have any other information or stories you would like to share?

A: No, I think that's it!