



# last word

by Janine Adamson

## Succulentsing the life from me

**Why is it I spend my life writing about crops, yet cannot seem to keep a houseplant alive? I'm a certified failure – a monstera murderer, kalanchoe killer, orchid obliterator. Yet in the hands of others, they thrive?**

I've given up touching anything in a plant pot bar the weekly 'Thursday watering spree'. From a simple cheese plant which is now smothered in spider mites, to a living stone (Aizoaceae) which exploded last year, it seems I do not have green fingers. Oh the irony!

Even the Venus fly trap ate itself and died – admittedly I may have encouraged it to snare a blue bottle – RIP.

The thing is, I adore plants. I'd go as far to say I need them in my life and at the risk of sounding like I've completely lost my marbles, I can feel their energy.

I do all of the correct things – study their environmental stipulations and strive to select the perfect spot, note their watering requirements, feed them as per the label, re-pot them as necessary. Yet the only true survivor is an ancient aspidistra that belonged to my late nan – it's a good 20 years old – and must have gone at least 12-months without being watered, prior to my possession.

It even took a tumble down a whole flight of stairs after

some modest festive drinks spiralled out of control. Whereas the carpet didn't fare too well, said plant simply dusted itself off and continued on its plight of survival.

In some ways, perhaps I am that plant and maybe you are too? It's resilient and dedicated to the cause – the ultimate low maintenance pal. It keeps going and doesn't make a scene yet delivers the goods. There's definitely something to be said for those who keep a lower profile, propping up the system with gutsy iron will alone.

Might I add, I'm feeling quite inspired having investigated the history of the humble aspidistra. According to the RHS, our friend Will (I've decided that shall be its name, given its willpower), is a 'must-have houseplant'.

Furthermore, aspidistras thrive in dark corners and other tough spots, requiring little attention and adding a tropical appearance without any fuss. 'No home should be without at least one'. I'll take that – I can be tropical...ish!

What's important to note is unlike many popular houseplants, Will isn't overly flashy and doesn't bloom – in some ways, it blends into the background. But its absence would be distinctly felt and it's that which we must remember.

I suppose what I'm meandering around to get to is, don't underestimate the power of being the ordinary within what can feel like an extraordinary world. For 20+ years Will has silently contributed to this home when other plants have come and gone (admittedly not helped by my botanical misdemeanors). Because in many ways, consistency is more effective and impactful than being a flash-in-the-pan.

Simply put, the world can't function without reliable grafters. At times it might feel as though no one would notice if you weren't there, but my goodness, they would. Utter chaos would ensue – you wouldn't build a mansion with no foundations – bangers are nothing without the mash.

Having been the editor of *CPM* for a year, not a lot has changed in terms of what makes me tick. I still find orchestrated networking abhorrent, overthink every interaction with another human being, and 100%

continue to question why anyone would find what I say remotely interesting.

But I'm still here doing it, dodging the balls and being authentically me. And while I know I'm rather different to others in my trade, as long as I can publish insightful magazines which people enjoy reading, hopefully you don't mind if I'm being unequivocally 'Janine' along the way.

So to all of you out there who consistently show up to do life, who align with a sparrow rather than a peacock, I'm in your corner – you've got this.

## Journalism awards



Although personal bragging makes my insides groan, I've been told it's important to share good news with our readers. Besides, it's testament to the quality of this magazine at the end of the day, and it's that which I'm truly invested in.

*CPM* picked up two accolades at the recent Guild of Agricultural Journalists Awards held in London. Melanie was awarded runner-up in the Omnia digital farming category for her feature 'Smart tech: connecting the dots' which

ran in our June 2024 issue.

Then, much to my surprise (especially so given my column this month), I was announced the winner of the Guild's arable award in recognition of the feature I wrote about industrial hemp, which you can find in our February 2024 issue.

I'm delighted for both myself and Melanie, and also, for *CPM*. The magazine continues to uphold the highest standards while exploring topics which inform and intrigue. Having a pat on the back is appreciated at the end of the day.