Just start with one...

Award-winning houseplant experts Nikki and Holly Barsby, main; different textured plants on a windowsill, above; a trailing air plant, below

Take it slowly and learn as you go recommend houseplant experts Nikki and Holly Barsby, writes Hannah Stephenson

People who don't have an outdoor space can create spectacular indoor plantscapes, say award-winning mother-and-daughter team Nikki and Holly Barsby, founders of houseplant shop and consultation service In The Garden, whose 'A Feast Of Foliage' won RHS Chelsea Gold in the houseplant and container gardening category.

But how can beginners create an indoor space to rival outdoor show gardens?

Start with a pot of show-stopping succulents

"An amateur can start with one pot – right pot, right plant, right place," says Holly. For an easy, low-maintenance display, you might pair Kalanchoe 'Magic Bells' with trailing succulents like string of beads (senecio) and echeveria. It might be a bright, indirect sunny hot environment and you can use any type of container. It requires a little water, which will soak in before it gets to the bottom," says Nikki.

The pot doesn't need holes as long as you don't overwater it, she stresses. It may be wise to have a reservoir at the bottom to drain any excess water.

Consider air plants

"An air plant is even more low-maintenance," says Holly. "Put it in a humid bathroom and it makes for good decor."

Give it a bath once a week and make sure it is well-drained afterwards and that's all you need to do, they advise.

Find the ideal spot

Do your research as to a suitable spot for your plants before you invest.

"If you are forcing a plant because of the aesthetic and put it in the wrong position in terms of light, or draft, or temperature, then it's not going to survive," Holly warns.

While succulent containers won't need drainage holes or much watering, plants including peace lilies (Spathiphyllum wallisii) will need regular watering.

Avoid moving happy plants

"If a plant seems happy in a place, don't move it, even though sometimes the rules say that you should place it in a different spot. If it's happy, leave it," says Nikki.

Try layering for a maximalist effect

"Take into consideration the height, span, potential growth rate, leaf colour and texture and the size of the container you're using," says Holly.

Plant up one pot at a time and test how they look, moving them to assess which looks best where and build from there, she continues. There isn't a hard and fast rule to placement, just go with your personal choice.

"From our perspective, if you're looking at the aesthetics, I like a flow. So if you paired a palm with, say, a rubber plant, you have two very different leaves, but you can almost see through the palm to the broad leaves of the rubber plant.

"The growth rates are quite similar, but even if they weren't – and you were thinking of budget – I'd go for one larger statement plant, individually planted or placed in a pot, and go for a smaller one placed on a plant stand, raising it up so you're creating height that way," Holly suggests.

Make a statement

"I wouldn't be scared to go for a bigger statement plant," says Holly. "I think they can sometimes be easier to look after than a tiny pot because the watering for the small pot can catch you out if it's hot and it dries out quickly."

Go tropical

If you want a more tropical feel to your indoor space, look towards plants such as anthuriums, which offer splashes of tropical colour to bright, warm rooms and produce eye-catching flower-like 'spathes' in shades of red, orange, pink or white, atop glossy leaves

"Find plants which offer you different things, such as flowers, variegated leaves and different forms, then your look isn't as linear and gives you potential seasonal interest," suggests Holly.

Consider containers

Unless you have a statement container, make sure the plants remain the stars of the show, the pair advise. However, vintage and repurposed containers which have personality and create an aura can enhance a room's aesthetics, they note.

Allow space to dodge your display

"Most plants don't like to be brushed up against, or near a door where it's draughty. The leaves get a bit bruised. If you have limited space, go for tall and slender plants, such as sansevieria, which are tough and will go with succulent plants like string of beads. Or in lower light you could do ZZ plants or aspidistras," says Nikki.

"Put an air plant in a humid bathroom and it makes for good decor

'We could learn a lot from our hens'

Jane Howorth talks to Cat Thomson about finding homes for one million hens

Last year the British Hen Welfare Trust (BHWT) rehomed their millionth hen, Henrietta. Along with 30 other hens she was invited to join His Majesty's flock at Highgrove. BHWT was founded by Jane Howorth, MBE, who decided to set up a hen-related charity devoted to saving the lives of ex-commercial laying hens.

She says, "I was utterly convinced about what amazing pets ex-commercial hens made, but I thought it would be a battle to get the general public on the same page. However, something struck a chord, and the rest is history."

Her first advertisement looking for retirement homes for hens had thousands of responses. Today 60,000 hens are saved annually by BHWT. "I never intended my initial small-scale rehoming efforts to become a full-blown national charity, but, as with everything these chickens touch, plans hatched, and things snowballed."

Despite rehoming hundreds of hens over the years she explained that one hen, Vicky, captured her heart. "She wasn't in great health when I picked her up from the farm. The other hens tried to attack her, but the trust and friendship I built with that one little hen taught me so much about how they cope with adversity and how they make the most of what they have. We could learn a lot from our hens."

She adds, "These little feathery bundles have such a will to live. No matter how down and out they may appear. They are joyous, life-enriching pets who just want to scratch around and be free – they don't ask for much in return. They are good for the soul. There is no better feeling than watching a timid chicken flourish into the hen she was meant to be."

Jane Howorth, founder of the British Hen Welfare Trust

Currently, Jane's mini flock consists of unwanted cockerels, Bertie and Sweep, and two hens, Margaret and Squeak.

Since setting up BHWT she has unloaded crates of hens with Jamie Oliver at his home in Essex, met national treasure Pam Ayres, comedian Bob Mortimer, Deborah Meaden, and Amanda Holden and been on TV with a Romanian Agricultural Minister as well as filming with crews from around the world.

She stresses that she is extremely grateful to everyone who supports BHWT's work. She feels one of the most rewarding parts of her job is meeting the people whose lives have been transformed by hen keeping.

"It's been humbling at times to hear stories about how hens have turned around lives and brought joy to people."

Although there have been times of stress, she has no regrets, saying, "I love what I do."

For more information and latest rehoming dates in Scotland visit www.bhwt.org.uk