

Mini Pot Plant Goes Maxi

For the last few years I've had the opportunity every other week of visiting a garden centre which usually has a very good stock of mini pot plants, and if something has struck me as interesting, and if there has been space on the windowsill for it, I have bought it. There's quite a lot of windowsill available, in the corridor next to our chapel. We call it the 'statio corridor', it's where we assemble to process into the chapel before Lauds, Mass and Vespers.

The mini pot plants have no name tags, so you don't know what they want, only what they are going to get. A couple of years ago I saw one which just had a couple of long, thin, rather yellow leaves, but there was something attractive about it, and I bought it. Sometime later I saw a bigger version elsewhere in the garden centre, and discovered that it has the delightful name of 'bird's nest fern'. It seemed to like the windowsill, a bit of plant food and its leaves became green and shiny, and it grew, and it grew, and it out-grew the windowsill, as some pot plants are in the habit of doing. It was either make a detour for the procession and process around it, or put it somewhere else. I tried it on the floor in front of the statue of Mary and the child Jesus which stands at the end of our statio corridor—the statue was carved from a railway sleeper by Sr Oda at our house at Schotenhof on the outskirts of Antwerp. The fern looked great there, but the leaves began to change, it didn't have enough light. I rushed it to the top floor of the Abbey near a roof light, and it grew, and it grew, and it grew, and it is still growing. It dislikes full sun, but the roof light is fitted with a blind so the fern is living in luxury. Other mini pot plants have been less successful, but I enjoy the bird's nest fern every time I walk past it.



There is a delightful story about a quick-growing plant in the Bible, at the end of the book of Jonah. God has been asking Jonah to go to Nineveh to preach repentance, and eventually, after trying to get out of it, he goes—and Nineveh repents. Jonah seems to have been looking forward to a bit of fire and brimstone, and he is furious when God takes pity on the city. Grumpy Jonah sits down to see what will happen to Nineveh, making himself a shelter to shade himself from the sun. God very kindly makes a castor oil plant spring up to shelter him even more, and sooth his bad temper. Jonah is delighted with his plant, but the next day it withers, and Jonah is furious with God for letting the plant die. God points out to Jonah that if Jonah is concerned about the fate of a plant, then God has every right to be concerned about the fate of a city.

This story, probably written sometime between the late 5th to early 4th century BC, is highlighting God's compassion, preparing the way for the revelation of God's love for all his creation that will be made visible to us in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

I wonder if they sell mini castor oil pot plants anywhere?

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