



# Hilda

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A trip to the other side of the world led to a change of career for Rosanna Costello, who has now put down her retail roots in the city of Edinburgh

You never really know what, who or where is going to inspire a new business venture. For Rosanna Costello it was succulents, a great granny and New Zealand. If we go back to the beginning, Rosanna’s career commenced after gaining a Product Design degree at Dundee University. She then worked for a furniture company and she admits it was an exciting time, getting to see designs turned into reality, using both technology and traditional manufacturing techniques.

But things started to change after Rosanna got married, “My husband Tom and I went to New Zealand for a year and started trying out different ideas we had for working for ourselves and starting our own businesses,” she recalls. During one brainstorming session, Tom suggested Rosanna combine her love for succulents with her other passion, design. “In our previous homes in Leeds I’d filled our spaces with houseplants and covered the windowsills in succulent propagations!” explains Rosanna, “I seemed to have a knack for growing plants, and I loved spending afternoons repotting and sorting out all the plants, but I never dreamed I could turn it into a business.”





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Rosanna started out with a drop shipping business in New Zealand, selling succulent related products such as pots, tools and accessories, but she quickly realised this business model wasn't for her, “The lack of connection throughout the process and with the end customer was not how I wanted to run my business. I wanted to work with people and help them and their plants to thrive.” When the Covid 19 pandemic struck, the couple had to return to the UK and this turned out to be the perfect time to switch up the business. Rosanna decided to expand into all types of houseplants, and she launched Hilda online in November 2020.

It wasn't long before Rosanna was eyeing up a physical space for Hilda – a unit on the corner of two busy roads in Edinburgh. “The shop was a closed, and seemingly abandoned, battery shop that we would walk past often and always exclaim how good it would be for a Hilda houseplant space,” she describes, “it had huge, fantastic windows that had previously been blocked up for years. Some local residents mentioned that they'd never actually seen through the windows before as they'd been blocked for so long!”

With the prospect of those big windows flooding her dream plant shop with light, they decided to go for it, and before long they were clearing tonnes of rubbish and scrap metal from the space. It turned out to be a bigger project than expected, so Rosanna enlisted the help of design firm Studio Significant Others to ensure they made best use of the space, and to help bring her own ideas together cohesively.

One concept the team brought to life was the ‘plant portal’ – the round opening which connects two parts of the shop. Behind the curtain lies the section of the store which is currently still a work in progress. The pair in fact had a pressing deadline for opening the store as they were expecting a baby, so they decided to renovate in two stages, opening the front section in July 2023, (just before baby arrived!) and they are now creating what will be their Houseplant Hospital plus a workshop and events space in the back section. Rosanna has big plans for the Houseplant Hospital, and she is also keen to design and manufacture some of her own products too, taking her back to her original roots in design.

So, where does the great granny come into the story? “The name comes from Tom's great granny who was called Hilda. She was a keen plants-woman and lived through three centuries to the grand age of 103!” Rosanna explains. “We still have one of her houseplants (now over 40 years old!) and the dot above the ‘i’ in the Hilda logo is inspired by her handwriting. Seeing her inspirational relative's name above the door of her very own shop was a hugely proud moment for Rosanna, and she admits she couldn't have done it without the help of her friends and family, in particular her husband, Tom. And there's no doubt Hilda herself would have been delighted to see where Rosanna's love of plants has led.

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