

Add Color & Healthy Air with Houseplants

Jennifer Brennan
Chalet Horticulturist

NASA testing proved houseplants clean air –by filtering out potentially dangerous chemicals from our inside environments, houseplants:

- reduce the amount of chemicals to which one is exposed
- reduce the duration of exposure
- change the form of chemical

Chemicals

Trichlorethylene – found in printing inks, paints. Adhesives, paint remover

Formaldehyde - found in paper bags, waxed paper, paper towels, particle wood, plywood and synthetic fabrics

Benzene – in plastics, rubber lubricants, dyes and detergents, tobacco smoke and vehicle exhaust

Xylene – found in printing, leather, paint products, tobacco smoke and vehicle exhaust

Ammonia – found in window cleaners, floor waxes, house cleaners

Top 10 Reasons Houseplants Make You a Healthier Person

We live in a world that is reducing our connection with all things natural. There is plenty of research to confirm the real emotional and physical benefits of having plants in our home or workplace. In addition to being beautiful, houseplants actually can make you and your family healthier.

1) Whether flowering or just showing us their leafy side, plants make us happy. Three different studies have shown that people receiving flowering plants *always* elicit what psychologists call the Duchenne, or true, smile.

2) Plants produce life-giving oxygen while absorbing carbon dioxide.

3) Plants give off water. Notice how dry your skin feels in the winter when the central heating is on? Plants transpire, releasing up to 97% of the water we provide them, increasing the humidity in our dry homes. Schefflera is particularly effective in increasing humidity.

4) Houseplants may seem like just a pretty accessory, but they're actually working hard to absorb volatile compounds (benzene, formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, xylene and ammonia).

With so much emphasis on new buildings being "tight" and energy efficient, many now retain more of these toxic compounds. One study found that as few as fifteen houseplants (6-8" diameter pot size) throughout a house removed 87% of the toxins in an 1800 sq. ft. home in only one day!

5) Plants have a calming influence, and actually reduce stress:

Studies have shown blood pressure readings lowered by the presence of plants in the indoor environment as well as reducing headaches and fatigue.

More health benefits from a greener living or work space? Scandinavian studies have shown that houseplants can reduce coughs, sore throats and other cold related illnesses substantially - more than 30%!

6) Parents - plants can actually increase learning. European research found university attendance improved, test scores rose, and behavioral problems were reduced by more than 60% in classrooms with plants as opposed to sterile, "nonplant" environments.

7) Families with small children and loud pets, plants with large leaf mass and “harder” leaf surfaces (Ficus, Spathiphyllum, and Dracaena, for example) cut noise pollution by absorbing and reflecting noise. This is especially true in rooms with hard surfaces (marble walls, stone floors).

8) For maximum benefit, try small groupings around the room rather than a single large one. Also, place these groupings in corners rather than in the center of the room.

8) Ever think of interior landscaping specifically for personal health reasons? Bromeliads, many orchids and easy-to-care for succulents (think Jade Plant) intensify their oxygen production/carbon dioxide absorption cycle at night. Consider these for your bedroom.

10) Have a friend or family member just home and recuperating from a hospital stay? The inclusion of plants, flowering or foliage, inside the patient’s room dramatically reduced: anxiety, recovery time, pain, and the number of minor post-surgical complications.

Best Plants:

Florist Chrysanthemum (all 5 chemicals) - Sun

Peace Lily *Spathiphyllum* sp. (all 5 chemicals) - Shade

Red-edged Dracaena (4 chemicals) -Shade

Variegated Snakeplant *Sanseveria* sp. (4 chemicals) Shade

English Ivy *Hedera Helix* (4 chemicals) Sun or Shade

Cornstalk Dracaena (3 chemicals) Sun or Shade

Gerbera Daisy (3 chemicals) Sun

Flamingo Lily *Anthurium* (3 chemicals) Sun or Shade

Bamboo Palm *Chamaedorea* sp. (2 chemicals) Shade

Weeping Fig *Ficus benjamina* (2 chemicals) Sun or Semi-Shade

Chinese Evergreen *Aglaonema* sp. (2 chemicals) Shade

Spider Plant *Chlorophyllum* sp. (2 chemicals) Sun or Shade

Boston Fern *Nephrolepis* sp. (2 chemicals) Shade

Summary

This presentation of proven benefits doesn’t even address the real reason we buy plants in the first place- to set a mood, to create a special look, to just make us happy. Enjoy them for those “emotional” reasons and reap the huge physical benefits they also provide.