



Clean indoor air naturally with plants

Despite our love of the great outdoors, the COVID-19 pandemic has likely kept many people indoors for longer periods of time. For some folks, they're abiding by the safer at home recommendations. Others are spending more time inside because they've been working from home for months.

Because we're seeing more indoor time, it's natural to want to make our living and workspaces more pleasant and attractive. You don't have to go the extreme of a complete remodel. The addition of a few plants can make a world of difference in a home's aesthetics. And, not only do plants make a space more pleasing to the eye, they also act as air filters and help purify the air 24 hours a day.

Most people don't think about it, but the air is filled with many different chemicals. While invisible to the eye, everyday products such as carpeting, paint, upholstery, glues and plastics emit chemicals into the air. Some of these products contain chemicals like benzene, formaldehyde and trichloroethylene. Unfortunately, many of these products aren't easily avoided.

Thanks to NASA's research on how to clean air in space stations, it was discovered house plants are an effective, natural and inexpensive way of removing pollutants and toxic chemicals in the air. NASA researches tested many indoor plants for their air purifying abilities and discovered many houseplants actually absorb these chemicals from the air, which in turn makes the air cleaner for us to breathe. So, it boils down to the fact that not only do living plants make an indoor environment more attractive, they're really good for us. All it takes is about eight to 15 plants in an average size home.

Researchers at NASA also discovered some plants are better air filters than others. The plants most effective in removing formaldehyde, benzene, ammonia and carbon monoxide from the air, all of which have been linked to health issues, include bamboo palm, Chinese evergreen, English ivy, Gerbera daisy, corn plant (*Dracaena fragrans* varieties of Janet Craig, Massangeana and Warneckii), mother-in-law's tongue, pot mum and peace lily.

So how does it work? Plants absorb some of the particulates from the air at the same time they're taking in carbon dioxide, which is then processed into oxygen through photosynthesis. In addition, microorganisms associated with the plants are present in the potting soil, and these microbes also are responsible for some of the cleaning effect.

The great thing is you don't have to have a green thumb. Many of these plants are easy to grow and care for. Keep in mind, however, some plants do contribute pollen and floral scents to the air.

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