

By Julie Jacobs

The Healing Power of Plants

Did you know your houseplants may be doing double duty?

In addition to livening up your home's decor, they could very well be keeping you healthy. A growing body of evidence reveals that certain houseplants are capable of purifying indoor air, balancing internal humidity, and boosting mood and creativity. They even can help curb colds and provide other medicinal benefits.

You already may have learned that plants take in carbon monoxide and release oxygen. But in doing so, they also remove airborne toxins from synthetic building materials, as well as potentially harmful chemicals from the likes of paint, tobacco smoke, household cleansers, car exhaust and more.

One prominent NASA study found that houseplants eliminated upward of 87 percent of toxins over a 24-hour period. Experts recommend installing 15 to 18 plants in six- to eight-inch-diameter containers to purify a space about 1,800 square feet.



when the air tends to become very dry, prompting colds, coughs and sore throats. Research conducted by the University of Agriculture in Norway discovered that houseplants can reduce the incidence of cold-related illness by 30 percent, not only by increasing humidity but by decreasing dust as well.

Beyond improving air quality, houseplants can enhance health and soothe the spirit. Bamboo palm, for instance, is believed to make people feel calmer, while Chinese evergreen can reduce stress and lower blood pressure. Aloe vera, which grows nicely indoors, is used widely to treat cuts and burns; you simply cut off a piece, open it up, and apply the sap to the wound.

Still other plants, like Strawberry begonias and spider plants, have been associated with boosting productivity and creativity—perhaps by raising levels of the hormone dopamine that manages the brain's information flow.

So as you begin your gardening outside, bring some green inside and reap all the benefits that houseplants have to offer. ▲

Best Plant Purifiers

What are the most effective purifying plants? Chrysanthemums, ferns, ficuses, palms and philodendrons, for starters. Peace lilies, which eradicate a host of chemical vapors such as acetone and ammonia, are especially helpful in the bathroom. Christmas cacti remove formaldehyde, found in stains, varnishes, upholstery and furniture made of particleboard. And rubber plants, along with English ivy, African violets and heart-leaf philodendrons, serve as great humidifiers.

Adding moisture inside your home is particularly important during the winter months

For more information visit: www.best-home-remedies.com; www.care2.com/greenliving; www.ehow.com; www.pfaf.org; www.prevention.com; www.quickandsimple.com; www.sixwise.com.

Medicinal Herbs

For centuries, herbal preparations have been used to treat minor health problems such as nausea, headache and insomnia, as well as some chronic conditions.

Chamomile, for example, has been shown to ease stomachaches, sage to alleviate sore throats and mouth ulcers, and garlic to treat yeast and fungal infections. Check with your doctor before taking any herbal preparation; avoid them if you're pregnant or breastfeeding. ▲

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