

# BRINGING THE Outdoors IN

HOW THE AVERAGE HOUSEPLANT CAN  
IMPROVE YOUR INDOOR AIR QUALITY

BY NIKKI SNEED

**W**ith the merrymaking and gift-giving over and the bright lights and festive colors gone, what is there to look forward to but harsh grey days and long cold nights? One easy way to kick those wintertime blues is to add vibrance to your health and home by bringing flowers and plants inside. It's easy to feel trapped indoors during the winter, but just a simple blast of color from an orchid or poinsettia will chase that claustrophobic feeling away.

Heather Droke, owner and designer at Garden Vignettes, says that there are many benefits to having indoor plants. "Studies show psychological benefits found in those who have indoor plants include having higher self esteem, mood, well being and stability, as well as less stress and depression, often important when days are shorter and there is less sunlight," says Droke.

Whether you are beginning to feel down after the holidays or you just want to brighten up your living space, try adding a beautiful winter arrangement of holly or a Ficus tree to your house. Your mood is guaranteed to improve.

If you are worried about the amount of space you have available, or the

lack of light that comes with smaller homes and apartment living, have no fear. Droke says that there are always options. "There are plants that can take bright light as well as low light conditions" and many different sizes of arrangements that can accommodate any space. "Garden Vignettes can help find the perfect plants for your space," she says.

There are also options for pet owners who worry about their fur babies chewing on leaves. Droke recommends several "pet friendly" plants, such as bird's nest and staghorn ferns, the Ficus species and assorted succulents like jade plants and aloe vera.

In addition to being beautiful centerpieces and mood lifters, plants perform the important job of filtering the air around us.

"Plants help grab and filter polluted indoor air. While some plants are better than others at absorbing pollutants, all plants have properties that are useful for improving indoor air quality. Plants also help with increasing humidity levels, which can be nice during dry winter days," Droke says.

In 1989, NASA performed a study showing the ability of certain plants to purify the air around them of toxins. The study specifically focused on the

plants' ability to remove formaldehyde, benzene and trichloroethylene, three highly common air pollutants that pose health hazards.

With these chemicals being present in everyday air, it is important to know the best ways in which to combat them. You could simply buy a powerful air filter to keep in your home, but a quieter, cheaper, more energy friendly and certainly more aesthetically pleasing solution is to follow NASA's lead and use houseplants to filter the toxins away for you.

Droke recommends golden pothos, dracaenas, Ficus trees, heartleaf philodendrons, bamboo palms and Chinese evergreens as being especially good at improving indoor air quality. NASA's study includes many of these plants, specifically showing that golden pothos are highly effective at removing trichloroethylene and benzene and dracaenas are efficient in removing benzene.

The results of these studies not only prove the cleansing effects that plants have on indoor air quality, but also show that a mixture of different types of plants will work together to purify your home's air in a complete, ecological and economical way, in addition to being a gorgeous accent that beautifies your space.

Heather Droke,  
owner and designer at Garden Vignettes

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