

Indoor Plants Revive Our Health and Our Spirits

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Interior decorators discovered the value of plants indoors centuries ago. In current home magazines living plants and flowers are used lavishly throughout every room. Decorators value plants primarily as a design element and use them according to their color, texture, size and shape. Plants are also frequently used as "substitute furniture" -- filling large void spaces in a new apartment or home until we have the money to purchase expensive furniture. Plants may create a special mood or theme. But most of us simply use plants indoors because we feel that they add to the decor, and more importantly, we simply enjoy growing them.

The business world also discovered the "decorating" aspect of plants indoors. Visit almost any large corporation office today and you will find evidence of this. But businesses also sponsored a lot of research to uncover the reason plants make a difference in indoor environment. Years ago they discovered that people simply FEEL better with plants around. Next time you go to a mall, think about the way it is designed. Did you think all those plants and fountains or waterfalls are there to make the mall pleasant? Hopefully that is part of it, but bottom line -- plants and the sound of moving water make us feel better. And people who "feel good" spend more money!

The business world also knows that an office with living plants is a more inviting, more productive work environment. A conference room with plants creates business sessions which flow smoother, with less frustration and fewer disagreements. Again, people who "feel good" get along better and are more productive -- good for business! I have my own personal theory about why plants and moving water make us feel better. It is simply that we are living in a colder, harder world every day. Anything that takes us a bit closer to nature relaxes us and soothes our spirits.

Research from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) support the theories that plants make us feel better, but they give very scientific reasons. The bad news from their research is that the air we breathe inside our homes, offices, and malls is filled with pollutants. Furniture drapes, carpets, insulation, paint, office machines, -- even our cologne and perfume -- contain pollutants. These cause many unpleasant symptoms, including headaches, dizziness, respiratory irritation, skin rashes, and even nausea and vomiting. (Whew! Does it make you feel better to know you have a good excuse to be "sick and tired of working"?)

The good news is that we can purify this polluted indoor air -- with low cost and attractive methods. Common indoor plants can cleanse our air, dramatically reducing toxic chemical levels in buildings with

poor ventilation. Just by placing live plants throughout our homes and offices (and malls) we can dramatically reduce toxic chemical levels in the air we breathe. NASA recommends placing fifteen to eighteen plants in an 1800 square foot home to cleanse the air. Perhaps the best news is that some of the best plants for fighting air pollution are easy to grow. Weeping figs, bamboo palms, dracaenas, and corn plants are good choices for large tree-like plants. Peace lilies, philodendrons, pothos, bromeliads, spider plants, and agloenemas are good smaller plants. What a blessing these indoor plants are! Not only do they make our homes, workplaces, and public buildings more attractive and inviting, they actually make them healthier for us to live in! The label on my special (heavenly) orange-rosemary bath oil could also apply to indoor plants: They "relax our bodies, calm our senses, and revive our spirits".

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