

An Exploration of North East Traditional Plant Remedies

by Margaret Timothy

INDOOR PLANTS FOR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Plants can transform the look of a room. Their role in helping our health and wellbeing is less widely known. Horticultural scientists advise that house plants can benefit our physical and emotional health through removing toxins and particles. NASA tests in a space craft packed with plants showed markedly better air. Within their BioHome project NASA has found common house plants serve as living air purifiers. Living closer to nature can also help you to live longer. Hospital patients who have a view of nature recover from illness and surgery more quickly than those who don't.

Indoor air can be up to 10 times more polluted than outdoor air. Toxic gases emitted from paints, cleansers, **air fresheners**, vinyl floors, carpets, upholstery fabrics, furniture and much more can cause damage to our bodies. Plant filled rooms contain 50-60% fewer airborne moulds and bacteria than rooms without plants.

Plants can capture potentially harmful gaseous and volatile chemical compounds in 3 ways through small pores in their leaves, by diffusion through the plant cuticle on the leaf surface and through the activity of micro- organisms

Varieties of dracaena(a small shrub), ficus(figs), nephrolepis(ferns) and syngonium(vines) can remove the largest quantities of these compounds. A spider plant placed in a small enclosed space can remove 96% of carbon monoxide from the air.

Plants boost air humidity levels through evapotranspiration – the movement of water from leaves and soil into the atmosphere

Therefore they can relieve the impact of ‘sick building syndrome’ which can cause dry skin, itchy eyes, respiratory irritations and headaches. Peace lilies and ivy have particularly high transpiration rates..

Groupings of plants with variation in plant shape, size and colour often grow better as humidity naturally increases around them – reducing stress on the plants as well as people

The positive effect is not fully understood but care for plants can give a sense of purpose and reward and in work situations there can be perceived wellbeing through a theory called ‘attention restoration’ .Many research projects have found reduced fatigue and stress in office workers when plants were present. There were also less cold-related illnesses less sick days taken.

Plants with the best benefits

The following plants are most effective in removing chemicals-:

Mother Fern	Dragon Tree	Ivy
Ficus	Phalaenopsis (orchids)	Peace Lily
Ferns	Chrysanthemum	Palms
Spider Plant	Orchids	Mother-in-law’s tongue
Gerbera	Azalea	