

Caring for houseplants

It is important that you feed houseplants with a balanced fertiliser especially during the growing season. Houseplants soon exhaust the growing medium and need balanced nutrition for healthy growth. Fertilisers that contain organic ingredients such as seaweed, humic acid and fulvic acid will greatly improve soil fertility.

Feeding houseplants

Houseplant Focus is a multi-purpose fertiliser and will provide all the necessary nutrients needed by the plant to compensate for the declining fertility of the growing medium. It is formulated to suit most indoor houseplants such as Spathiphyllums, Ivy, Anthuriums, Ferns, Dracaenas, Ficus, Palms, as well as Poinsettias, and Bromeliads. Some special plants such as African violets, cacti and others will benefit from more specific fertilisers such as **African Violet Focus** and **Cactus & Succulent Focus** respectively.

Alternatively, for a simple and convenient way to feed plants you can use a **Houseplant Focus Drip Feeder** throughout the year.



Humidity for houseplants

Most houseplants originate from the tropics where humidity is high, whereas the home environment is quite dry – naturally in the summer and due to central heating in the winter. Houseplants will respond to regular misting of their leaves and growing medium





with soft water or **Houseplant Myst** which can act as a foliar feed, growth enhancer and pest repellent. Misting is best carried out in the morning. Although it is unlikely to cause any problems, it is advisable to avoid misting plants with hairy leaves.

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Fresh air at night

Most plants give off oxygen during the day and carbon dioxide at night, but some do the reverse so they are ideal for bedrooms where fresh air is needed mostly at night. Orchids, (especially *Phalaenopsis* and *Dendrobium* which are super night oxygenators), cacti especially Christmas cactus and Easter cactus, bromeliads, Swiss cheese plant (*Monstera deliciosa*) and *Aloe vera*.

Dendrobium phalaenopsis

Houseplant pests

White 'threads' on leaves, or white fluffy insects in plant crevices

These are most likely mealybugs. Remove with a cotton bud dipped in methylated spirit and wipe the leaves and/or stem clean regularly to prevent an infestation. Additionally, spray with **SB Plant Invigorator** following the instructions on the label. After the first signs spray every four days for at least four times, to kill off any remaining insects.



Mealybugs on a Dracaena



Black flies

These very small and slender, mosquito-like flies are fungus gnats (*Sciaridae*), also known as houseplant flies or sciarid flies. They hatch when in warm home conditions. Unless you keep your plants very wet, they would only be likely to appear if you use a wet repotting mix which contains the eggs already. It is very unlikely to happen if you use a good quality repotting mix. The wetter the potting medium is, the more likely it is to be infested with gnat larvae.

Gnats and their larvae cause little or no harm to plants. They should disperse if you open the windows and you can use yellow sticky traps to attract the adults. Allow the plant to dry out between waterings to minimise any remote chance of the flies laying eggs in the medium. Fungus gnat eggs and larvae require moist soil and soon die if they dry out.



Repotting houseplants

Houseplants should be repotted every two to three years. You can give a boost to most houseplants without repotting them by removing the top three to five cm of soil and replacing it with fresh growing medium. Repotting is not a good way to restore health to an unhealthy plant as it tends to disturb its roots.

The best time to repot a plant is in the spring or early summer. It is important to use an appropriate growing medium to repot houseplants as some of them, such as African violets and Streptocarpus, carnivorous plants, cacti and succulents, bonsai etc., have specific requirements in terms of substrate.

It is very beneficial to add **Root Ultra** when watering for the first couple of months after repotting, to improve rooting and minimise any shock.



Other products from Growth Technology



The Growth Technology Promise

We are a British family business, making advanced, specialist products for thriving houseplants. We use the best quality ingredients to ensure the best results every time – no short cuts, no compromises. For all our products we consider first and foremost the plant's needs, sustainability for our environment, and value and convenience for the customer.

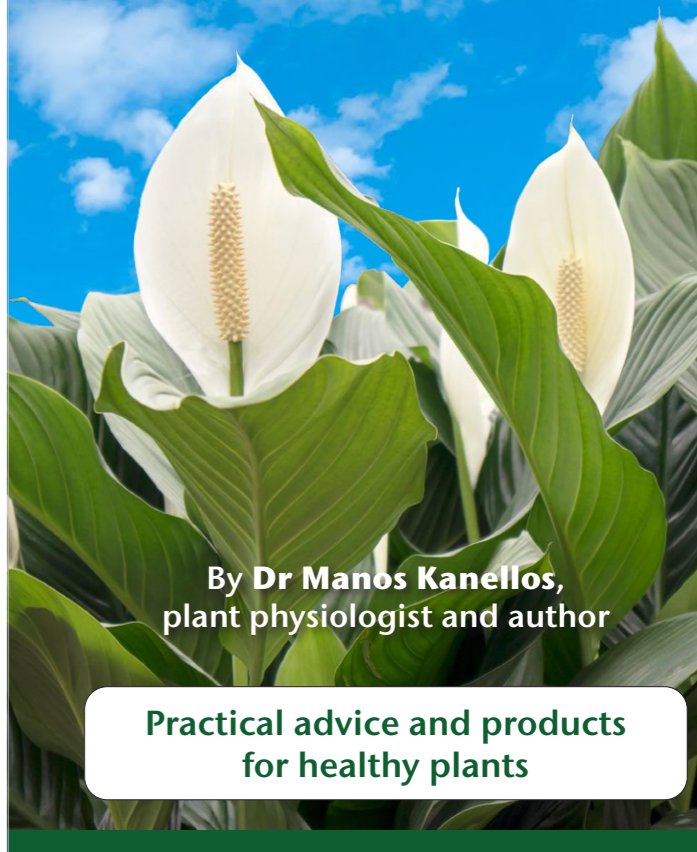
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Houseplants for Clean Air



By **Dr Manos Kanellos**,
plant physiologist and author

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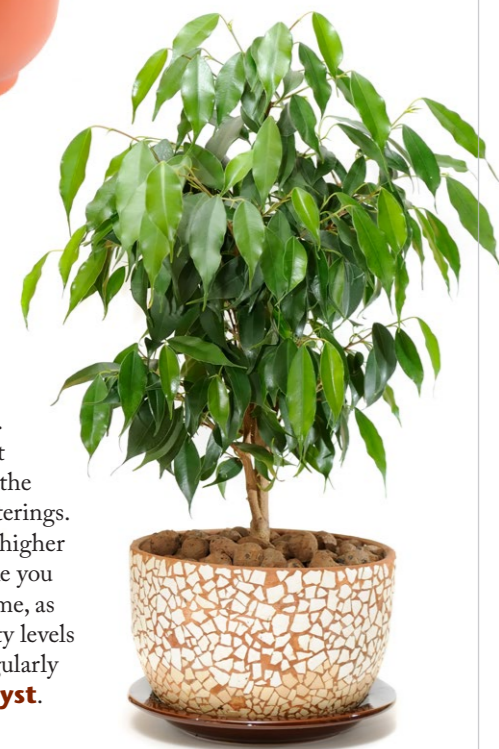
Top 10 plants for clean air



Dracaena reflexa

All this plant needs to thrive is to be placed in an area with indirect sunlight and the soil kept slightly moist.

Dracaena reflexa is one of the most efficient plants at removing pollutants from the air in your home.



Weeping Fig (Ficus benjamina)

A popular houseplant that is also very effective at purifying the air in your home. Very low-maintenance. Water it frequently, but to avoid root rot allow the soil to dry between waterings. Growth occurs best in higher temperatures, much like you would have in your home, as well as relative humidity levels above 50% so spray regularly with **Houseplant Myst**.

Gerbera jamesonii

A beautiful flowering plant. While intended for and mainly used outdoors, Gerberas are becoming more popular to display in containers for indoor use.

Very effective at cleansing the air.

Gerberas prefer full sun, plenty of water and well-drained soil. If you try to use this as an indoor houseplant, make sure you have it in an area that has plenty of natural light. It also thrives in moist soil without over-watering it. *Gerbera jamesonii* is able to withstand a wide range of temperatures.



Chrysanthemum morifolium

A popular perennial plant that loves direct sunlight and a medium amount of water. Suitable for outdoors and indoors if kept cool.

With the proper care, it will start to produce lots of beautiful blooms that not only help brighten the room, but they help cleanse the air of many chemicals that are common in homes.



Houseplants have many benefits and help us improve our quality of life. They brighten the home adding colour and interest; they release oxygen into the air (thus making breathing easier) as well as water (thus decreasing the incidence of dry skin, colds, sore throats and dry coughs).

Adding plants to hospital rooms speeds recovery rates of surgical patients, whereas plants in offices decrease fatigue, colds, headaches, coughs, sore throats and sickness rates.

Very importantly plants remove toxins from the air – up to 87% of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) every 24 hours, according to NASA research. VOCs include substances like formaldehyde (present in rugs, vinyl, cigarette smoke and grocery bags), benzene and trichloroethylene (both found in man-made fibres, inks, solvents and paint). Benzene is commonly found in high concentrations in study settings, where books and printed papers are found.



Peace Lily (Spathiphyllum)

This beautiful plant is easy to care for, and requires very little light. It should never be put in direct sunlight, as the rays of sun may lead to leaf burn. Peace Lily is the most efficient at removing airborne pollutants. Simply put it in a corner, water it well and it will help purify the air around you.



English Ivy (Hedera helix)

Another popular houseplant that helps filter airborne toxins inside your home. It also helps reduce mould.

Caring for *Hedera helix* is relatively easy. Keep it at a constant temperature, give it plenty of direct sunlight and water generously with well-drained soil. If you can do these three things, English Ivy will return the love with cleaner air in your home.



Devil's Ivy (Epipremnum aureum)

It is best to keep *Epipremnum aureum* near a window, without direct sunlight shining down on it. The soil should be peaty with lots of moisture.

Devil's Ivy is extremely easy to care for and is very efficient at cleansing the air of pollutants.

Tail Flower (Anthurium andraeanum)

A beautiful evergreen plant that is most known for its gorgeous flowers. Very easy to grow if you give it plenty of indirect light. The blooms love to soak in the rays, and you'll be rewarded for weeks with their beauty.

It prefers high-humidity so spray with **Houseplant Myst** regularly and ideally place it on a humidity tray.



Bamboo Palm (Rhaps excelsa)

The perfect fan palm to have in a dark corner of your home. They are able to tolerate low-levels of light, high amounts of water and a wide range of temperatures. While this houseplant prefers to live in moist soil, it does need to have the proper drainage available to avoid root rot.

It can thrive in both indoor and outdoor environments.



Mother-in-law's Tongue (Sansevieria trifasciata)

This is one of the best houseplants for absorbing airborne toxins. It can endure low amounts of light for long periods, but it prefers to have plenty of bright light. Just make sure you don't overwater this plant, as it is likely to rot if the soil is too moist for too long.

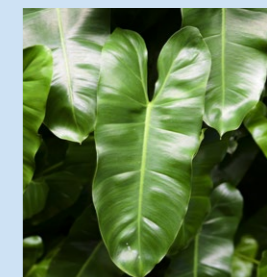
Mother-in-law's Tongue requires very little maintenance.



More air purifying plants

Chinese Evergreen (Aglaonema modestum)

Removes benzene and formaldehyde from the air and thrives in low indirect light. Available in an array of visually appealing varieties



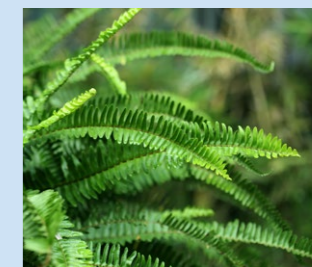
Philodendron

Removes formaldehyde from the air and thrives in moderate to low indirect light. A quick-growing trailing plant, known for its heart-shaped leaves.



Spider Plant (Chlorophytum comosum)

Removes formaldehyde, xylene, and toluene from the air and thrives in moderate, indirect sunlight and cooler temperatures. A great houseplant for propagating!



Boston Fern (Nephrolepis exaltata)

Removes many air pollutants from the air and thrives in moderate, indirect sunlight and high humidity.

For more information on houseplant care, visit www.focus-on-plants.com