

This is a wonderful request! Drawing on the source material, I can certainly generate a comprehensive blog post detailing the science-backed benefits of bringing greenery into your living and working spaces.

Here is the blog post, structured and fully supported by the provided sources:

Sustainable Living: A Hobby for All Seasons: 7 Science-Backed Benefits of Indoor Plants

Medically reviewed by Deborah Weatherspoon, Ph.D., MSN — Written by Rebecca Joy Stanborough, MFA on September 18, 2020

Indoor gardening is currently experiencing a massive surge in popularity, fueled by visual trends on social media, dedicated plant-based podcasts, and convenient online subscription services like Lazy Flora and Grounded. While many social media trends quickly fade, indoor gardening is likely to endure because of the extensive ways houseplants contribute to improved health and well-being.

Here is what research tells us about the benefits of living and working alongside indoor plants.

The 7 Essential Benefits of Indoor Plants

While many people simply enjoy the aesthetic of beautiful, cultivated greenspaces, science confirms there are deep health advantages to having plants around.

1. Indoor Plants May Help Reduce Stress Levels

Having plants in your home or office can help you feel more comfortable, natural, and soothed. One study published in the *Journal of Physiological Anthropology* measured biological factors associated with stress, such as heart rate and blood pressure, after participants completed different tasks.

Researchers found that the task involving indoor gardening (repotting a houseplant) actually lowered the stress response in participants. Conversely, a short computer-based task caused a spike in heart rate and blood pressure, even though the subjects were young men accustomed to computerized work. Ultimately, the researchers concluded that working with plants can reduce both physiological and psychological stress.

2. Real Plants May Sharpen Your Attention

If you are looking to boost focus, sorry, plastic plants won't help. In a small study, researchers placed students in a classroom with either a real plant, a fake plant, a photograph of a plant, or

no plant at all. Brain scans revealed that students who studied in the presence of real, live plants were more attentive and demonstrated better concentration compared to students in the other groups.

3. Working with Plants Can Be Therapeutic

For individuals managing symptoms of mental illness, indoor gardening can be incredibly helpful. Horticultural therapy has been used by researchers to increase feelings of well-being among people dealing with conditions such as depression, anxiety, and dementia. Although this practice has existed for centuries, it has a modern expression today: Medical clinics in Manchester, England, are now "prescribing" potted plants to patients suffering from depression or anxiety symptoms.

4. Plants May Help You Recover from Illness Faster

Simply being able to look at flowers and plants might accelerate recovery from surgery, injury, or illness. A 2002 review of research indicated that people recuperating from several types of surgery required less pain medication and had shorter hospital stays when they were able to look at greenery during their recovery periods. It is worth noting that most of this research focuses on plants and natural scenery in hospital settings, rather than in the home.

5. Plants May Boost Your Productivity

A bromeliad might turn out to be the best colleague you've ever had. Multiple studies have demonstrated that incorporating plants into the workspace boosts both creativity and productivity. A frequently cited study from 1996 found that students in a computer lab on campus worked 12 percent faster and experienced less stress when plants were situated nearby. Furthermore, a 2004 study showed that people performed better on creative word association challenges when a plant was in the room. Another study in 2007 concluded that people working in spaces with more plants took fewer sick days and were generally more productive.

6. Plants May Improve Your Whole Outlook on Work

While having a window view of a city park is known to improve job satisfaction, a potted plant can have a comparable positive effect. Researchers interviewed more than 440 Amazon employees in both the United States and India, finding that those whose office environments included natural elements, such as indoor plants, felt a greater sense of job satisfaction and commitment to their organizations. Researchers suggested that these natural elements helped to buffer the effects of anxiety and job stress.

7. Plants May Improve the Quality of Indoor Air

Scientific research regarding phytoremediation—the process of plants scrubbing contaminants from the air—often references a NASA study conducted in the 1980s. In those early studies, researchers were attempting to find ways to improve air quality inside a sealed spacecraft and

determined that the roots and soil of houseplants significantly reduced airborne volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Since that time, researchers have both confirmed and questioned those initial findings. Recent studies indicate that a person would need to shelter a significantly large number of plants to equal the air purifying efficiency provided by modern biofilters and other technologies.

If you are interested in purchasing houseplants to naturally freshen the air, some of the species shown to be most effective include:

- Areca, lady, dwarf date, and bamboo palms
- Boston fern
- Rubber tree
- Spider plant
- Ficus tree

Health and Safety Considerations

While bringing plants into your home or office confers many benefits, there are necessary risks and health considerations to keep in mind.

Choosing Varieties Safe for Children and Pets

It is crucial to verify that a new plant is safe before bringing it into a home with children or pets. A complete list of toxic plants is difficult to find because some plants have poisonous parts while others are perfectly safe. Reliable sources, such as your state extension service, poison control office, the ASPCA, and the National Poison Control center, offer resources for checking plant safety.

Common Plants That May Pose a Danger: A brief sampling of common plants that may be dangerous for children and animals includes:

- Amaryllis
- Aloe vera
- Azalea
- Lilies of many varieties
- Mistletoe
- Philodendron
- Poinsettias
- Sago palm

Remember, this is not a comprehensive list, so always double-check safety before introducing a new variety.

Be Alert for Pest Infestations

Houseplants can sometimes act like a Trojan horse for molds, insects, and other pests. It is recommended to avoid using soil from your outdoor garden when repotting. Additionally, be mindful of the watering needs for each species, as overwatering can create ideal conditions for the growth of mold and fungus gnats. Always check leaves for signs of pests, such as webbing, eggs, or holes, to stop an infestation early.

Can Houseplants Trigger Allergies or Asthma?

There is some debate regarding this question. If your allergy or asthma symptoms are typically worsened by pollen, you may be relieved to know that most common houseplants do not produce much pollen. While certain cut flowers, like daffodils, produce pollen, asthma researchers have not found evidence suggesting that indoor plants themselves cause asthma attacks.

However, if your symptoms are triggered by fungi, mold, or dampness, you need to pay close attention to the soil moisture in your pots. Researchers note that internal exposure to dampness, fungi, and mold can worsen asthma symptoms, especially in children. If you begin to notice asthma symptoms after adding plants to your home, it is wise to remove them until you can discuss your symptoms with a healthcare provider.

The Bottom Line

Having plants in your office or home can be a rewarding source of pleasure. Indoor gardening has proven benefits, including relieving stress, boosting focus, creativity, and productivity, and promoting recovery from illness. There is also evidence suggesting that houseplants may positively influence the air quality in your environment.

As you start your indoor garden, be sure to know which plants are toxic if you have children or pets, and stay alert for species that could aggravate existing allergies or asthma. Sharing your living or working space with living, "breathing" plant life can make your environment a healthier and happier place to be.