



CLEAN AIR MACHINES

Have you ever considered going indoors to “get a breath of fresh air?” It’s not as crazy as it sounds, considering the level of air pollution we experience daily from automobile engines, factories, asphalt plants, and pesticide use. A few well-placed house plants can make your *indoor* air safer to breathe.

Foliage plants are more than just decorative accents! NASA research has shown that foliage plants “scrub” the air, removing toxins commonly found in homes and office buildings. Volatile organic compounds known to cause allergic reactions, and even cancer or other serious health problems, have been found by EPA inside newer energy-efficient buildings. New building methods and products have led to what is called “sick building syndrome”, where vapors from toxic chemicals such as benzene, formaldehyde, and trichloroethylene, are trapped inside causing some people to experience headaches, asthma, and other allergy symptoms. Studies are still being made to determine if long-term exposure to these VOC’s can contribute to increased incidences of cancer.

How do plants “clean the air?” Plants naturally “breathe in” carbon dioxide during the process of photosynthesis. As a result of this process, oxygen is released by the plants’ leaves. Room air is also drawn into the soil of a potted plant as the plant begins to dry. Microorganisms living around plant roots “eat” any air-borne pollutants with which they come into contact, breaking down their chemical structures. The resulting pieces of chemicals are either taken up by the plant as nutrients, or remain harmless in the soil.

As a general rule of thumb, the larger the leaves, the more efficient the plant is at cleaning the air, but most plants are doing some good. Tests have shown that, while one plant is better at eliminating one chemical over another, an assortment of plants placed throughout an indoor space should make our homes and offices healthier. Potted plants are air purifiers that don’t require batteries or a filter change.



Here are just a few of the plants that can make it easier for us to breathe:

<u>Botanical name</u>	<u>Common name</u>
<i>Philodendron oxycardium</i>	Heart-leaf philodendron
<i>Philodendron selloum</i>	Tree philodendron
<i>Chlorophytum comosum</i>	Spider plant
<i>Aloe vera</i>	Medicine plant
<i>Epipremnum aureum</i>	Golden pothos
<i>Aglaonema</i>	Chinese evergreen
<i>Brassaia arboricola</i>	Dwarf schefflera
<i>Spathiphyllum</i>	Peace lily
<i>Dracaena fragrans</i> ‘massangeana’	Corn plant
<i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i>	Snake plant
<i>Hedera helix</i>	English ivy
<i>Dracaena marginata</i>	Madagascar dragon tree
<i>Nephrolepis exaltata</i> ‘Bostoniensis’	Boston fern
<i>Dracaena deremensis</i> ‘Janet Craig’	Janet Craig
<i>Rhapis excelsa</i>	Lady palm
<i>Dendrobium sp.</i>	Dendrobium orchid
<i>Ficus benjamina</i>	Weeping fig
<i>Chamaedorea seifrizii</i>	Reed palm