



Plants at Home: The Benefits of Houseplants

It is my honest belief that they have a place in every part of our lives. Let's explore the benefits of houseplants



About Us

Salisbury Greenhouse is a premium greenhouse that has been servicing the Edmonton area for three generations now. We grow most of our selection on our four acres of greenhouse space and we're confident that we know our plants.

Rob Sproule is a co-owner here at the greenhouse and Alberta's most popular gardening author. With 4 books and over 500 articles detailing everything you need to know about your garden, Rob truly believes that all everyone should feel empowered and inspired when gardening, while having a little fun, too.

To see more gardening tips, tricks, and terrific benefits, check out [Dig In with Rob](#) for hundreds of articles to make your garden the best of the best.

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Foreword

My all-time favourite home decor is the fresh, invigorating life of a houseplant. Not only do they add to your indoor aesthetic, but they actually add to your home life in many amazing and brilliant ways! They don't just work in a room, they work *for* a room.

If you've ever wanted cleaner air or a better attention span, there's a plant for that. If you've ever wanted to sleep better or feel better, guess what? There's a plant that, too! In this book, we're going to get down in the dirt about all the amazing benefits you can get from simply adding another plant pal to your home.

So, what are you waiting for? Turn to chapter 1 and let's explore how houseplants can make *your* life better!

Chapter 1: Mastering Plant Parenthood

Chapter 2: Air-Cleaning Plants

Chapter 3: Sleeping with Plants

Chapter 4: Best Plants for the Bathroom

Chapter 5: How Plants Can Make You Smarter

Chapter 6: Fighting Depression with Plants



Mastering Plant Parenthood

"A beautiful plant is like having a friend around the house."

– Beth Ditto

Houseplants are our nature-defying way of bringing the outdoors indoors. They allow us to bring a splash of fresh, green life into our homes to boost our aesthetic, while giving us all the amazing benefits that plants bring to the table. As natives of the wild world outside the walls of our homes, though, they do need a little care to transition to their new life, but, lucky for you, I've got the top tips to make mastering plant parenthood a cinch.

Picking a Plant

When it comes to starting your plant parenthood journey, the first place you need to start is picking a plant that will work both with you and your space.

Take a look at your **lifestyle**. Are you a busy-workaholic with a hectic schedule or a forgetful free spirit? If yes, your best bet will be something with low-maintenance needs and a hardy nature, like a zz plant, snake plant, or a succulent. Are you more of a flexible personality or someone who doesn't mind devoting some time and care to a little, leafy friend? If this is more you, then a pickier plant, like a fabulous fiddle leaf fig, will be right up your alley!

What's your lifestyle?

structured

flexible

“They need time to slowly adjust.”



Next, look at your **space**. What spaces are you looking to take the “vacant” signs off of? Houseplants typically prefer bright, indirect light near a window, but plenty of varieties can flourish in the dim corners, too.

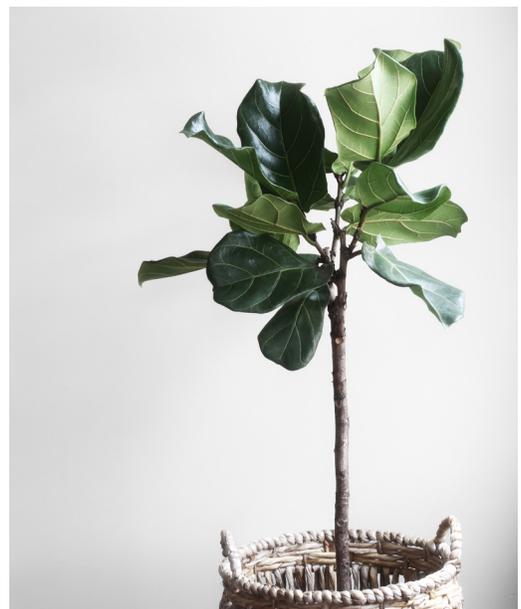
Typically, your plants will also prefer a **warm (but not hot!), humid environment**. The most popular houseplants are most at home in tropical environments, so dry and cold areas, like those next to a drafty window or door aren’t usually the greatest.

Remember, once you’ve settled on the specifics, you won’t want to make too many frequent or dramatic changes for your plants. They need time to slowly adjust to things like air, temperature, pots, etc. Do your best to keep them as comfortable as possible right from the get-go and you’ll have a much healthier and happier plant.

Too Much of a Good Thing: Food and Water

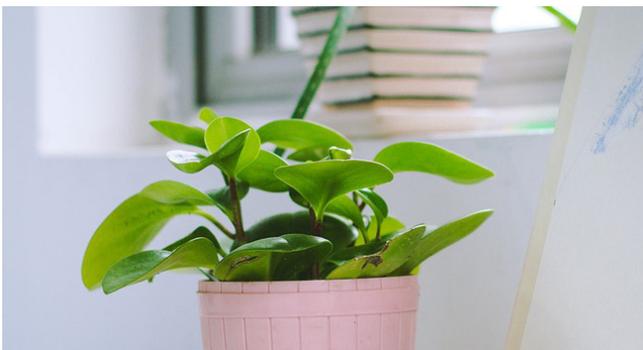
Like all good living things, plants need food and water to survive. The specific needs for each plant will obviously vary, from drought-tolerant plants to bog-loving plants, but generally you can expect the following:

- **There is such a thing as too much water.** When your plant’s thirst is quenched, the roots will stop absorbing water, and if there’s still plenty left in the soil, the roots can start to mold. This nasty phenomenon, known as root rot, is dangerous for our plants and challenging to cure. Under-watering is usually as simple to solve as just



adding water.

- **Start your watering schedule with your plant by not following one at all.** Every couple of days, stick your finger into the soil to your 1st knuckle. If it feels dry, add water. If it feels wet, you can leave it be for a few more days. You'll figure out what works for both of you soon enough.
- Same thing goes for **food, less is more.** Fertilizer is great at giving that nutrient boost to our outdoor plants, but indoor plants aren't exposed to the same wide scale of elements to need a pick-me-up as frequently. Generally speaking, the nutrients added to most potting soils tends to be plenty. If you really think your house-plant needs it, though, feed them only during the growing season, spring and summer, using simple, all-purpose fertilizer diluted in water.



Pots of All Shapes and Sizes

Sure, when it comes to picking a pot, you're looking for one that will unite your plant with your decor. However, you also need to make sure you're picking one that will make your plant happy, too.

When picking a pot for your fresh-from-the-store-bought-plastic-container plant, you'll want to look at one that will accommodate your plant's expected growth. I suggest starting with one that is **double the capacity** of what it started in and working your way up.

Just like a growing kid outgrowing their winter jacket every year, if your plant is happy and healthy, there's a good chance it will need a **pot upgrade** at some point.

If your plant starts dropping leaves like they went out of style or just isn't growing at all suddenly, **check to see if your roots are winding around the pot**. If they are, you're ready to move up a size.

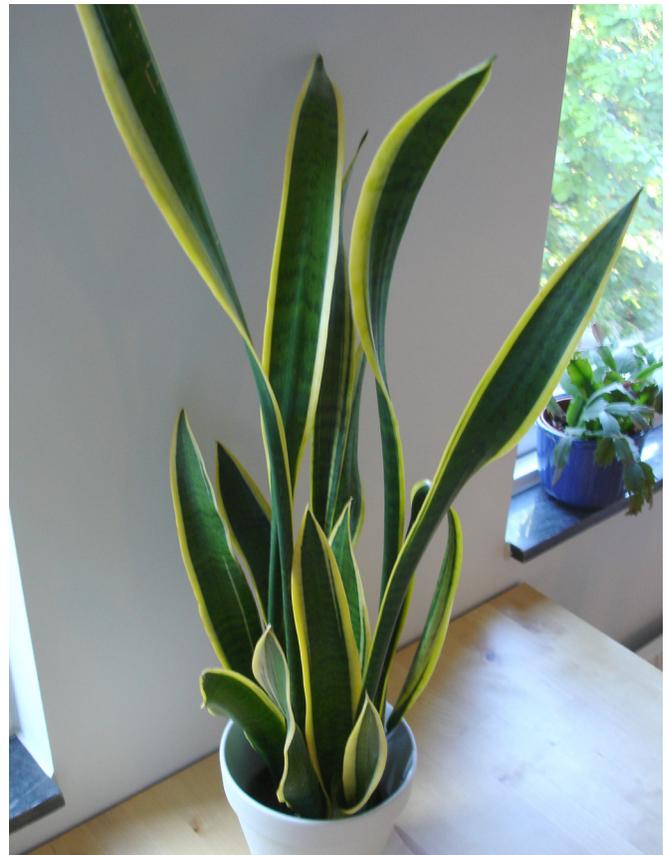
Listen When it's Talking to You

Bringing home a new plant is like bringing home a baby from the hospital: **you're in charge, you're nervous, and you don't know what it wants** (just speak English!). It doesn't feel like you'll ever be able to understand what it needs to keep it alive. Don't worry, you'll figure it out. Your plant will tell you - or, rather, show you - what it needs. S.O.S. signs from your plant are easy to spot - stunted growth, wilting, discoloured or dropping leaves - and they will be your indicators when your plant needs light, water, food, and even air, just be watching for when it does.

It's easy to become overwhelmed when bringing home a houseplant, especially if it's your first time. Don't let it get to you, though. With a couple of tips and a whole lot of time, you and your plant will soon find a rhythm that works for both of you, making plant parenting a breeze!

“ S.O.S. signs include:

- stunted growth
- wilting
- discoloured/
dropping leaves ”





Air-Cleaning Plants

"Just breathe. Sometimes you're only a few breaths away from feeling better."

– Amy Poehler

Did you ever dream about being an astronaut? Imagine, if you will, that it's many years in the future, and you're an astronaut living in a space-bubble on a distant planet. It sounds exciting, but it doesn't take long for reality to rear its ugly head.

The Toxic Truth

NASA would have built your bubble with the latest light-weight plastics and carbon-fibers. Here we encounter the problem that NASA has grappled with for 33 years: synthetic materials off-gassing nasty toxins, like benzene, formaldehyde, and trichloroethylene, which **make you seriously ill very quickly**, in your airtight environment.

Confronting this major challenge to space exploration, NASA conducted a major study in 1984 to see if ordinary houseplants can remove toxins from



household air. The results were astonishing.

Several years later, NASA constructed a structural “Biohome” to simulate a man-made space-bubble. Built entirely of synthetic materials, at first it was so flooded with toxins that it didn’t take visitors long to complain of sore eyes and breathing problems. So, NASA added 15 air-cleaning houseplants and within days the toxins cleared enough that visitors no longer showed symptoms of exposure.

Toxins in the Home

Air-borne toxins aren’t just NASA’s problem. Alarming, the materials we live with everyday infuse our household



air with a cocktail of toxins. Ubiquitous nasties, like formaldehyde, are found in pressed wood, paint, carpets, and drapes, just to name a few. New homes are particularly affected as toxins are at their strongest when fresh.

Plants breathe, or transpire, just like we do. In doing so, they pull toxins down into their root systems, where certain species of plants host symbiotic microbes. Amazingly, these microorganisms feed on the toxins like fertilizer and, in doing so, help enhance the plant’s overall health. It’s hard to believe, but the formaldehyde that makes us so sick can make our Boston Ferns healthier than ever before.

Best Plants to Remove Airborne Toxins

When it comes to cleaning air, some houseplants tower over the rest. Luckily, the best toxin removing plants are easily available, popular varieties.

NASA recommends two air-cleaning plants of average size per every 100 square feet in your home, and more if you're doing renovations involving particle board or paint. Here are a few of their top toxin removers:

Boston Fern: The oldest house-plant in the world is also one of the most efficient toxin and mold filters. Ferns' high transpiration rate makes them virtuosos at devouring formaldehyde as they increase relative humidity around them. Boston ferns have been popular since the Victorian era and thrive in moderately lit rooms.

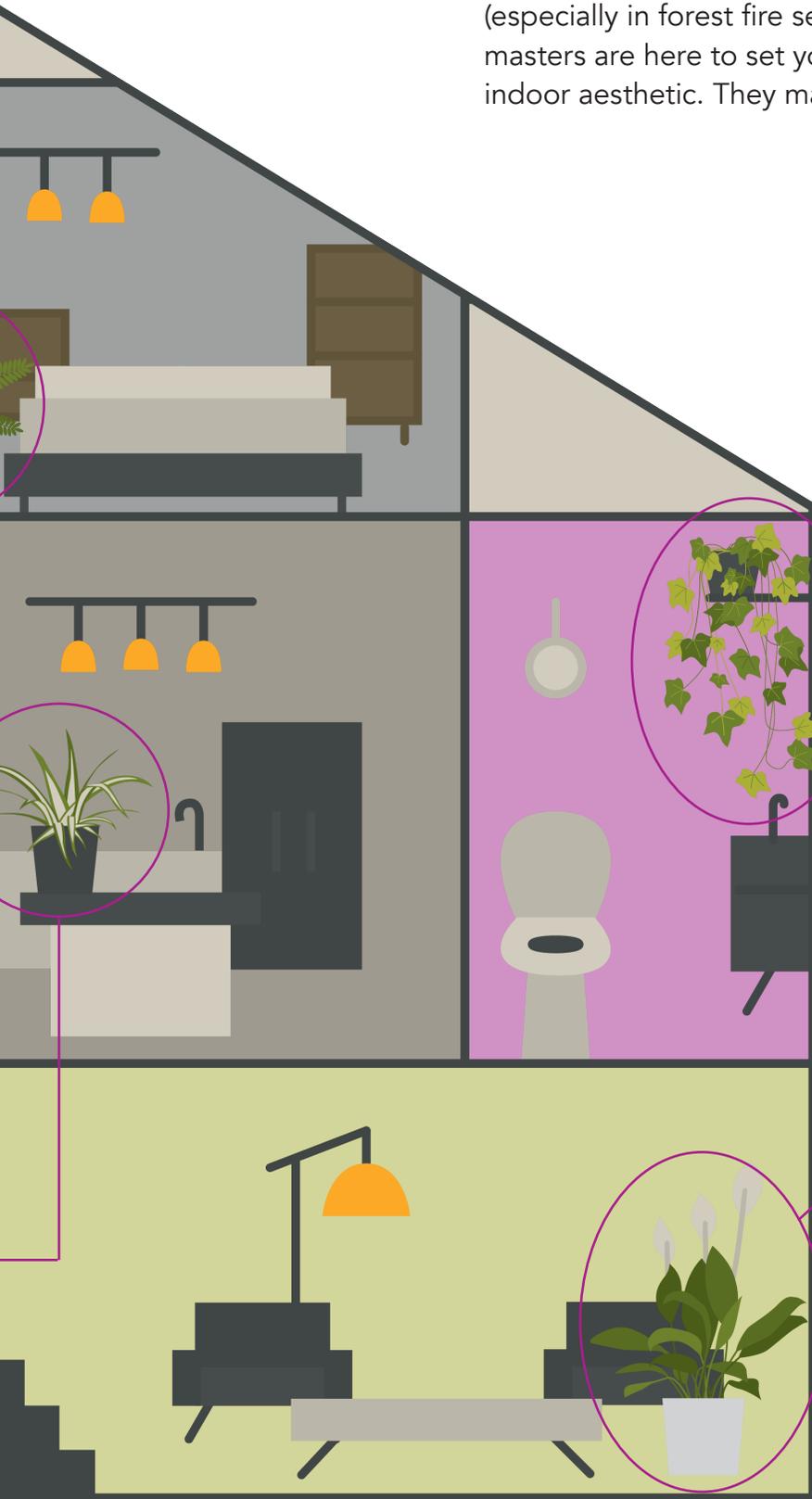
Bamboo Palm: Also called 'Reed' Palm, this thin, stately plant is a popular space-saver for narrow spaces and corners. It's also the world's best benzene and trichloroethylene filter. Place one near your new sofa to clean up the toxins leaching from it.

Spider Plant: The soft-spoken spider plant is very hard to kill, requires minimal light, and chows down on formaldehyde and benzene. It's one of the few plants to tackle deadly carbon monoxide, which is an odourless killer that accumulates over time. Set your spider plant next to the fireplace or in the kitchen, and other places where CO tends to build up. It's a must have for homes with clunky old furnaces.



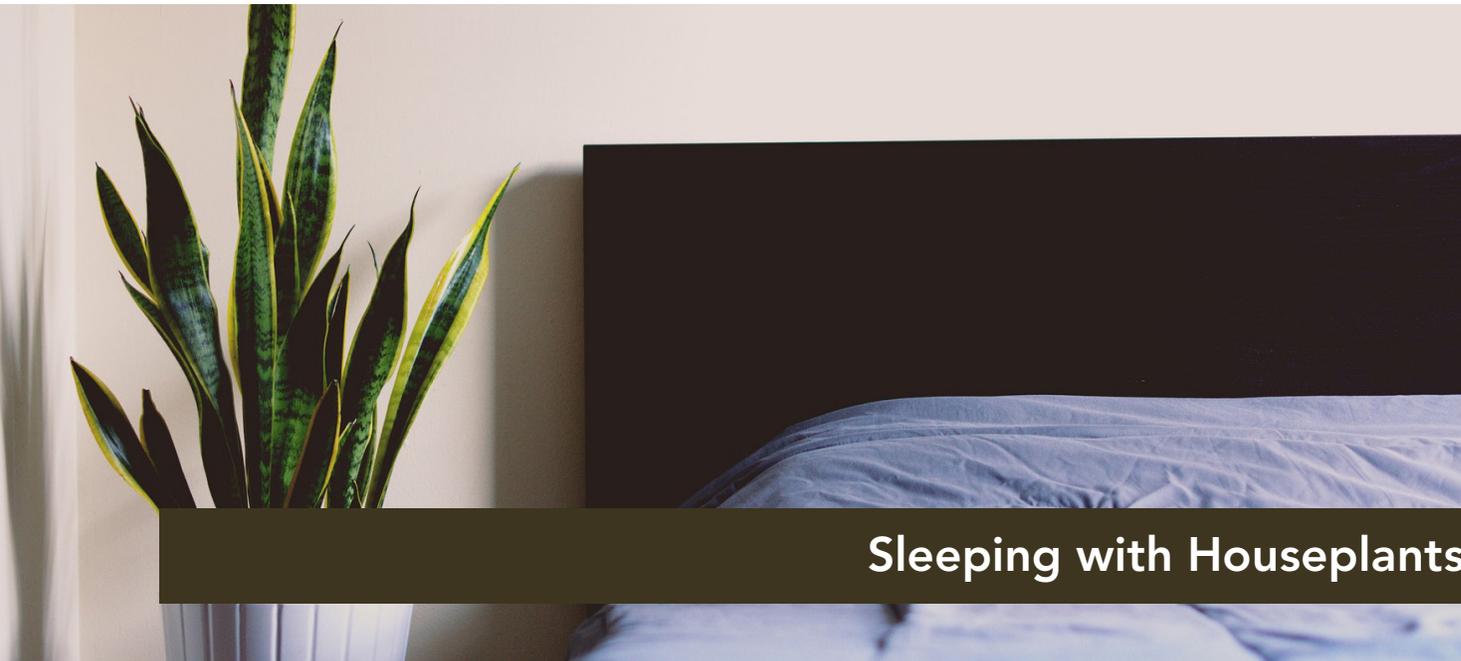
When we're at home, we shouldn't be worried about the air quality we're breathing in, there's enough concern for that outside (especially in forest fire season). Thankfully, these toxin-munching masters are here to set your mind at ease, while adding to your indoor aesthetic. They make it easy to settle in and breathe easy!

“settle in and breathe easy!”



English Ivy: One of the easiest vines to grow is a boon for allergy sufferers. Levels of airborne mold are reduced by as much as 60% within hours of introducing English Ivy. It's also effective for removing airborne feces (yes, you read that right). Ironically, the plant is toxic so keep it out of reach of children and pets.

Peace Lily: This low-light plant gobbles up the carcinogen benzene as it off-gasses from fabrics and paint, so it's a good one to have around during renovations. Put one near your entertainment center so it can suck up the acetone that electronics emit. Peace lilies need to be kept moist and produce white flowers throughout the year.



Sleeping with Houseplants

"The best cure for insomnia is to get a lot of sleep."

– W.C. Fields

When it comes to sleep, it's hit or miss whether or not I'll get what I need from it and I know I'm not alone. Across the globe, people like me are suffering from a thousand thoughts keeping them awake at night and making the little sleep they do get, feel insubstantial in the morning. No matter what it was plaguing us throughout the night, we're left groggy and tired, desperate for a hit of coffee to keep us going. Luckily, the solution to our slumber sobriety may just be as simple as adding another houseplant into the bedroom.

Lavender

One of the most globally renowned sleep aids that is popping up on every Pinterest page and news feed lately is the sensationally soothing Lavender. Used for centuries to **reduce anxiety and stress**, lavender has been revered for its relaxation-promoting abilities. Recent studies have even shown it to **lower heart rate and blood pressure!**



It's simple to add lovely lavender into your bedroom decor, with pretty plumes of purple flowers that burst from a pot. Simply **place your pot next to a window** to ensure as much sun as possible and **be careful not to overwater** this plant to continue loving its effects.



Gardenia

Known for its almost Valium-quality **sedative effects**, Gardenia's ability to emit the relaxing Crocetin makes it a strong contender for your next sleep aid in plant form. Studies have shown that it **reduces anxiety that inhibits sleep** quickly and easily so you can get back to your favourite dreamscape faster.

Not only great at helping you sleep, this plant is just plain beautiful, with stunning rose-like white flowers that look great on any bedside table. The downfall that comes with this plant, though, is its **high-maintenance needs**. A tropical native, this plant needs lots of bright, indirect light and high humidity. My best advice is to **place it next to a window** with a sheer curtain and **spray the plant with water** often to give it what it needs.



Peace Lily

An **air-cleaning wonder plant** that even NASA has celebrated, the pretty Peace Lily is one of the best house-plants you can add to any bedroom, insomnia or not. Not only does it scrub your air clean, it also **boosts humidity** in whatever room it lounges in and **suppresses allergens** - so you can bid those long winter nights of scratchy throats and sniffles goodbye!



To bring this wonderful, white, single-petal flower into your home, make sure it will be **sheltered in a nice and shady corner**. Water weekly, or when the flower begins to wilt.

Jasmine

Not just a cartoon princess, this gorgeous plant stands right next to lavender in the world of soothing flowers that tout their relaxation abilities. Emitting a soft, sweet fragrance, the scent of Jasmine has been known to **reduce anxieties** that prevent sleep. Research also shows that people who sleep with it nearby will wake up feeling **more refreshed, alert, and productive** throughout their day! To bring these subtly beautiful ivory flowers home, **place in direct sunlight** and **water when the soil is dry** to the touch.



Spider Plant

Another of NASA's favourite plants for its air-cleaning ability, Spider Plants will **clean the air of dangerous toxins** that prevent you from getting restful sleep. It **filters out chemicals** like formaldehyde and carbon monoxide - **which are not only carcinogenic, but can also cause headaches and fogginess** when you wake up. You may also notice fresher-smelling air with this odour-eater in your room, as well!

With a name like Spider Plant, there has to be a resemblance to the dreaded arachnid. Don't worry, though, this is one spider you'll love in your home. Enjoy long green leaves that dangle over their pot, looking just like the arching legs of a spider. Give it **bright, indirect light and regular watering** to enjoy all year round.

Other Plants for the Bedroom

Aloe Vera is not just a skin-saving superhero, it's also an **oxygen-producing powerhouse**. A long-leaved succulent with green, fleshy leaves, you'll love breathing easy with this houseplant by your side.

Rosemary isn't just for the kitchen. This woody herb will not only clean your air, but it can even **relieve stress, improve memory, and regulate moods!** Plus, you get more delicious, herbal flavour to add to your cooking.

Snake Plants (a.k.a. Sansevieria) has tall tentacles shooting up into the air that look great and **filter out harsh toxins**, like formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, and benzene. Get cleaner air and a better night's sleep with this snaky sensation.



“get cleaner air and a better night's sleep with these oxygen-producing powerhouses”

Nothing feels worse than being tired but not being able to sleep. It's a torturous limbo status, plagued by the thoughts of how tired you'll be tomorrow and how many coffees you'll need to stay awake. These plants will help you **banish those restless nights** and make sleeping and breathing easier all year round.





Best Plants for the Bathroom

"I'm no interior decorator, but just I have a feeling that plastic plants in the bathroom... probably not a good idea."

– Kyan Douglas

Let's talk about one room in your house that doesn't get quite as much publicity as others: **the bathroom**. That's right, the place where you go to lock the door and take care of everything private. It's an intimate space, where we can sing to a crowd of shampoo bottles or contemplate our greatest musings and as much time as we spend in there, it only makes sense to beautify it!

Houseplants in the Bathroom

The bathroom is an odd in-between place for many plants, with a very specific climate that isn't found anywhere else in our homes. As such private rooms, they tend not to have large windows (or any at all), so **lighting is generally much lower** than plants need. With all the showers and hot water being run in there, as well, they tend also to be **much warmer and higher humidity** than elsewhere.



With growing conditions as odd as these, it may seem impossible to grow anything in this room. Truth is, there are plenty of leafy green lovelies that will thrive in your throne room. Here are my top picks:

Orchids

These gorgeous floral plants offer stunning and unique blooms that are packed with colour and fragrance. Their reputation for being hard to care for has many people turning away from them, but the truth is, they **just need the right environment** to thrive. Turns out, that perfect environment can be found in the bathroom.

Coming from the jungle, Orchids need **lots of indirect sunlight, high humidity, and lots of heat**. Luckily, most bathrooms can check off most - if not all - of these boxes! Plant them in a gorgeous moss or bark and water only when dry for the best blooms.



“ lots of indirect light, and high humidity and heat ,”



Ferns

The original houseplants, ferns are amazing foliage-heavy plants that are easy to care for and beautiful to enjoy. Plus, with so many varieties to choose from, matching your washroom decor is simple - although, my top picks are Bostons, Asparagus, and Staghorns.

Preferring **high humidity and warmer temperatures** makes these leafy friends a perfect match for your bathroom. Just make sure they get **plenty of indirect light**.

Bamboo

Not just for panda bears, Bamboo is a beautiful plant to add to your bathroom aesthetic. With lovely leaves sitting atop tall stalks that can be straight or even shaped, you'll love its fresh, minimalist look.

You'll also love how perfectly it will fit into your bathroom, requiring **little light and very little care** on your part, so you won't spend more time in there than you already do. It's simple: just plant your stalks in some pebbles and change the water one or two times each month.

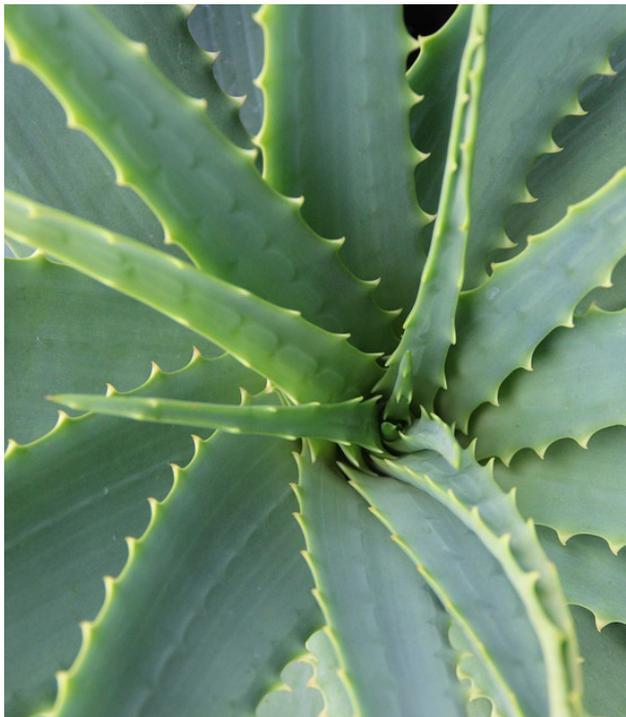


“ [the environment’s] similarity to its natural habitat brings out the lushest and glossiest leaves ,”

Philodendron

This luscious, leafy, and low-maintenance tropical comes from the **hot, humid, and low-lit** floor of the jungle, making it a perfect pick for the bathroom. The large foliage is gorgeous featured in any room, but their full potential really shines in the bathroom, where the similarity to its natural habitat brings out the lushest and glossiest leaves.

To keep a Philodendron happy, just give it some **medium-level, indirect light** and enjoy the bright green life it brings!



Aloe Vera

If you're like me, your medicine cabinet can be found in the bathroom, so it only makes sense that this first-aid flora belongs in the bathroom. This succulent is **packed to the brim with vitamin and mineral-rich gel** that is known for its skin-saving abilities that soothe everything itchy, burning, and sensitive.

It's also **incredibly low-maintenance**, so much so that people have called it an immortal plant. It likes **plenty of light**, so it's best near a window or near fluorescent bulbs, but it **hardly needs any water** at all, so the humidity in the bathroom may just take care of it all on its own!



English Ivy

This terrific trailer is an excellent choice for a bathroom, **basking in the humidity and taking care of the most disgusting toxins** the room has to offer. That's right, an English Ivy will happily munch away at both mould and airborne feces, so you can get back to breathing easy in the bathroom. Though, it should be noted it's too toxic for curious kids and pets.

As a natural trailing plant, the best way to enjoy English Ivy in the bathroom is **on a shelf or in a hanging basket**. They will survive low-light conditions, but they look their best when given a moderate amount of light.

Other Plants for the Bathroom

- **Air Plants** don't even need soil to grow and thrive in bright, humid areas.
- **Begonias** need plenty of humidity to thrive, so the bathroom is a natural fit for them.
- **Bromeliads'** big, red blooms love humidity, preferring it to regular watering.
- **Chinese Evergreens** love hot, humid conditions with low light and thrive with neglect.
- **Dracaenas**, or Dragon Plants, clean the air while they bask in low light and humidity.
- **Peace Lilies** love the humidity and lower lighting that the bathroom provides.
- **Pothos Plants** trail best in low lighting and humidity, but they're toxic.



Who says your bathroom needs to be barren? Just because it's not the most Instagrammed house in your home, doesn't mean it can't be beautiful and cozy! A simple touch of one of these amazing plants will give your bathroom the perfect homey feel that will have you lingering longer and longer on the throne.



How Plants Can Make You Smarter

"If you put enough smart people together in one space, good things happen."

– Erik Hersman



It's that time of year again where we're all suddenly sitting at desks, staring at screens and books, and pining to be outdoors. Few things make us appreciate a good hike more than being cooped up inside, serenaded by neon lights, looking out a window.

Now, I've spent a lot of time writing and thinking about our connections with the natural world. From learning about soil borne fungi that calm our nerves, to the instinctual longing for wild spaces at play in **Nature Deficit Disorder**, I've realized that our desire to be around plants isn't just emotional, it's physiological.

Putting the fern at the corner of your desk doesn't just make you feel good, it **heightens concentration, boosts attention span, and reduces mental fatigue**. In a 2011 Norwegian study, researchers assigned 34 students to either a plain desk or a desk surrounded with foliage and flowers. The latter group performed **unmistakably better** in reading tests than the former.

Why?

The learning benefit of plants isn't just a coincidence. This Norwegian study has been replicated many times since, with similar results, and the evidence is overwhelming. But why?

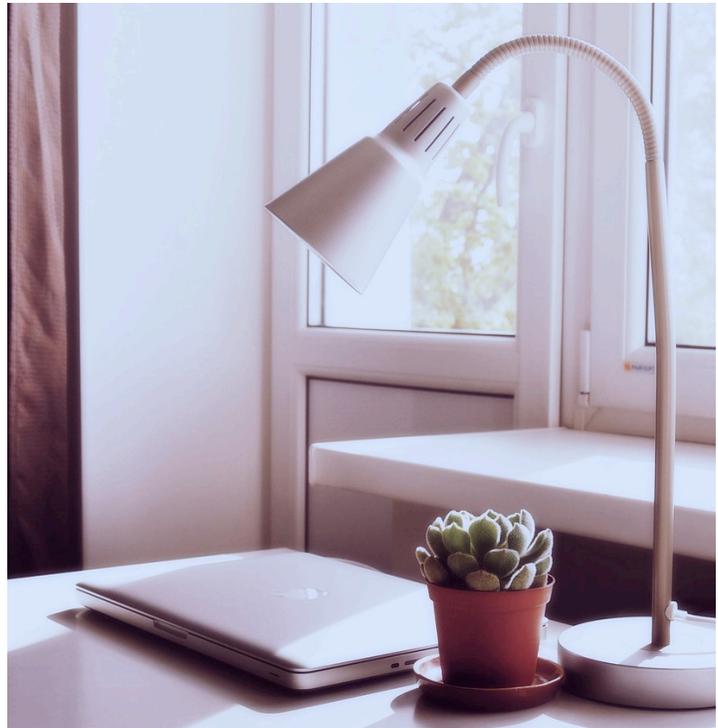
University of Michigan psychologists' **"attention restoration theory"** is the dominant theory of why this happens. The gist is that we expend a lot of energy on what we're focused on, so much so that we get fatigued quickly. A passive distraction, like a plant, **indirectly engages our focus and restores it in the process.**

We didn't evolve in offices. The vast majority of our evolutionary history has been spent among plants, with only the past couple centuries separated from them in our daily lives. **Blandly coloured, geometrically shaped spaces are unsettling** to us on a deep level. The sight and smell of plants relaxes us because it's ingrained in our biological memory.



“ 1 plant for every 3 employees ”

“ attention restoration theory: we expend so much energy on what we're focused on that we get fatigued quickly; a passive distraction restores our focus ”



In Office Spaces:

Savvy businesses are paying attention to this growing mountain of studies pointing to the benefits that plants bring to offices. Contrary to the current trends towards minimalist or “lean” thinking (wherein clarity of space = clarity of mind), **plants are the best kind of clutter** an office can have.

One plant for every three employees will start to improve the quality of the air in stuffy cubicles. Tension, stress, fatigue, and angry snappiness around the photocopier are trimmed back.

Morale increases and people tend to have a **more constructive approach** to their work.

The benefits aren't just psychological. Plants can also bring physiological benefits, too, like **reducing blood pressure, cutting back on sick days, and improving skin quality**, thanks to better air conditions. Plants even **absorb ambient noise** and take as much as 5 decibels of keyboard clacking, water-cooler clucking and corner office cussing out of circulation.



“ a bare desk doesn't necessarily mean you'll be productive there ”

“ plants are the best kind of clutter ”

So the next time you're in the mood to simplify, remember that, while simple is good, a bare desk doesn't necessarily mean you'll be productive there. Something as simple as an air-cleaning fern, a colourful daisy, or an awesome succulent can help calm your mind so you can focus better on the work at hand.





Fighting Depression with Plants

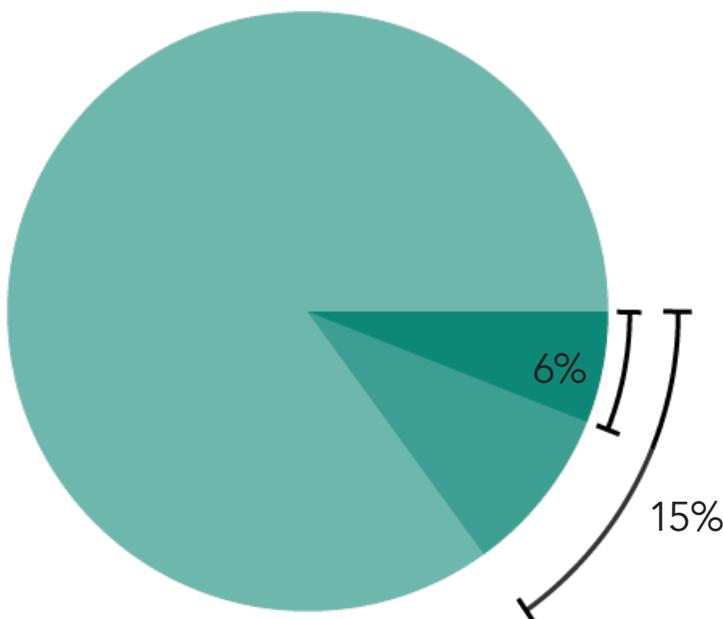
*"If you want to be happy for a lifetime,
be a gardener."*

– Chinese Proverb

We've so surrounded and saturated ourselves with technology that it's a humbling reminder how much our moods depend on a force as uncontrollable as weather. Especially when dark days descend and sunlight becomes scarce, many of us find often ourselves falling susceptible to the "winter blues".

The Winter Blues

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), is a **diagnosable illness that becomes more and more prevalent in countries further from the equator** (that's us). Between 6-15% of Canadians will endure some form of it, the overwhelming majority of them being women.



We often underestimate the potent role the sun has on mood. **Vitamin D** is increasingly being **linked to serotonin levels** in our brains (the happiest neurotransmitter of them all). When the January sun barely limps over the horizon, the **resultant chemical shift can make us drowsy, irritable, and downright blah.**

Winter air is cold and dry, and scratchy throats, flaky knuckles, and colds often ensue. Nature's usually vibrant palette is globbed over with monochromatic white and grey, and snow piles rising around us like mountains can make us feel helplessly claustrophobic.



Plants and Mood

Plants are astonishing. Their mere presence **lowers our systolic blood pressure, improves our overall moods, and makes the air we breathe more humid.** They remove toxins from our air, treat our colour-starved eyes to the vibrancy we're pining for, and promise that spring will return (eventually).

Canadian winters are juggernauts. We can feel very helpless, very quickly when the storm descends. On the other hand, **watching our planted seeds germinate can flush out the helplessness with a wave of life-affirming purpose.** Plant, tend, grow, eat, and repeat.



Plants in the Winter

A lot of people who think that growing seeds is a spring-thing are amazed at the year-round bounty a sunny windowsill can provide. From salad greens and leafy herbs, like chives and basil, to nutrient-rich sprouts and microgreens, all we need to do is **lay the seeds in the moist soil, provide proper light**, and nature will take it from there.

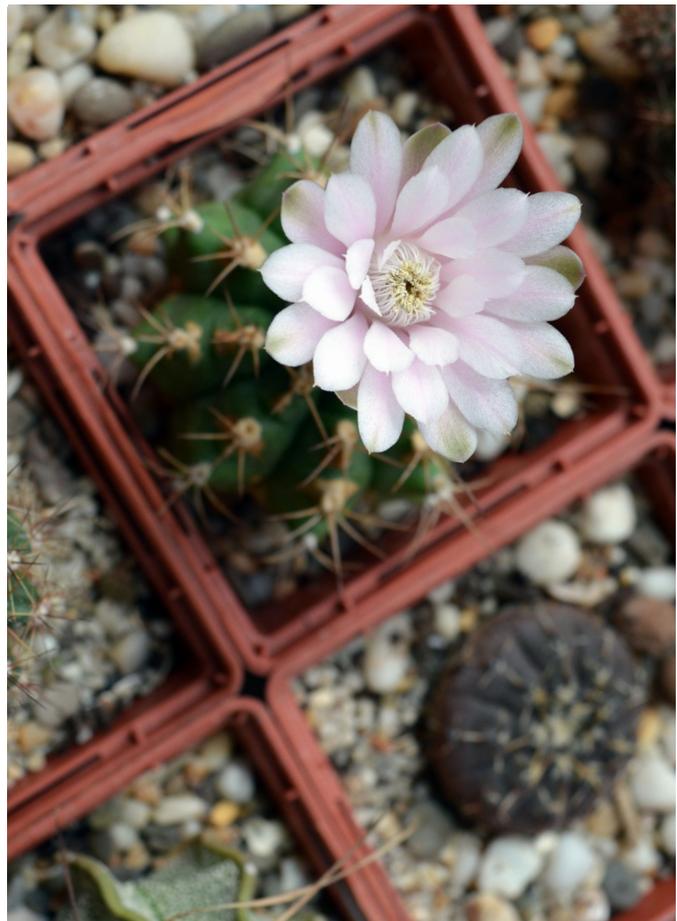
You can help your plants by increasing the humidity around them. Fill a tray with pebbles and water and set your plants on it, with space between the water and the pot. The **evaporating water will make it up to 50% more humid** than the surrounding air. You can also help yourself, and your health, by installing a humidifier to keep household levels above 30%.

Indoor Lighting

Physiologically, plants react to light deprivation the same way we do. They get **droopy, less vigorous, and their immune systems begin to lag**. While a lagging immune system means a cold for us, for plants it can mean pests, like spider mites.

With a sunny window, you can grow many varieties of herbs and salad greens without supplemental lighting, even in the dead of winter. While they'll grow, **improving your mood** and health as they do, they may need supplemental lighting to thrive, especially if it's a cloudy, gloomy winter.

While common fluorescent bulbs are better than nothing, they don't provide the full spectrum. Plants photosynthesize within the red spectrum and use the



blue spectrum for growth, so a **full spectrum bulb is ideal.**

Its effect on your seedlings aside, added full spectrum light is one of the best ways to shake off the winter blues. Vitamin D, which is linked to serotonin levels, is the **only vitamin that is activated by light**, specifically ultraviolet light, so some artificial sunshine may help a lot.



“ a couple of happy houseplants can go a long way to treating those winter blues ”

In the depths of winter, sadness can be hard to shake. Thankfully, a couple of happy houseplants can go a long way to treating those winter blues. With an added burst of year-round colour and a healthy boost of clean air and added humidity, you can face depression head-on, naturally.



