

## Plants for Indoor Well-being & Outdoor Protection

Ferns and Ivies are known by many to help clean your home's air and remove toxins. However, removing toxins is just one benefit.

Let's begin by listing the plants that efficiently remove the toxins from your environment. The recommendation for cleaner air is 1 plant per 100 square feet. The NASA Clean Air study found the plants below are effective at removing:

***\*Denotes some toxicity, mostly for dogs, cats, possibly infants.***

**Benzene**-used to make plastics, resins, synthetic fibers, rubber lubricants, dyes, detergents, drugs pesticides, tobacco smoke, vehicle exhausts, glue, paint and furniture wax.

**Symptoms**-eye irritation, drowsiness, dizziness, increased heart rate, headaches, confusion, and possible unconsciousness.

**Best Plant Helpers**-Bamboo palm, Chinese evergreen, English ivy\*, Gerbera daisy, Janet Craig\*, Marginata, Corn plant, Mother-in-Law's Tongue\*, Peace Lily\*, Chrysanthemum\*, Dracaena Massangeana, Werneckii\*, Spathiphyllum, Golden Pothos, Aloe vera\*

**Formaldehyde** found in paper bags, facial tissues, paper towels, table napkins, waxed paper, particle board, plywood paneling and synthetic fibers.

**Symptoms**- irritation to eye, nose & throat, severe results larynx & lung swelling.

**Best Plant Helpers**- Philodendrons\*, Spider Plants, Golden Pothos, Peace Lilies\*,

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Bamboo Palm, Gerbera Daisies, Pot Mum, Azaleas, Corn Plant, Aloe vera\*

**Trichloroethylene** arising from printing inks, paints, lacquers, varnishes, adhesives and paint remover/stripper.

**Symptoms**-over-excitement, dizziness, headache, nausea & vomiting, followed by drowsiness and coma.

**Best Plant Helpers**-English ivy\*, Peace Lily\*, Mother-in-Law's Tongue\*, Dracaena marginata, Cornstalk dracaena\*, Barberton daisy, Chrysanthemum\*.

**Xylene** sources are printing, rubber, leather, paint, tobacco smoke and vehicle exhaust.

**Symptoms**-irritation to mouth & throat, dizziness, headache, confusion, heart problems, liver & kidney damage, finally coma.

**Best Plant Helpers**- Dwarf date palm, Boston fern, Kimberly green fern, English ivy\*, Spider plant, Devil's ivy, Peace Lily\*, Bamboo palm, Mother-in-Law's Tongue\*, Weeping fig\*, Chrysanthemum\*

**Ammonia** often used in window cleaners, floor waxes, smelling salts and fertilizers.

**Symptoms**-eye irritation, coughing & sore throat.

**Best Plant Helpers**-Lily turf, Peace lily\*, Florist Chrysanthemum\*.

**Electromagnetic pollution** from computers and televisions (still in the testing stages for this area, all anecdotal).

**Symptoms**-Headaches, fatigue, & blurred vision.

**Best Plant Helpers**-Cereus peruvianus, Spider plant, Peace lily\*, Devil's Ivy, Aloe vera\*.

A bowl of sea salt or a quartz crystal near your phone, computer etc. is also neutralizing.

**Carbon monoxide**-from faulty furnace.

**Symptoms**-Dull headache, weakness, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion, blurred vision, loss of consciousness.

**Best Plant Helpers**-Bamboo Palm, Chinese Evergreen\*, English Ivy\*, Gerbera Daisy, Janet Craig\*, Marginata, Corn Plant, Mother-in-Law's Tongue\*, Pot Mum, Peace Lily\*, Warneckii\*.

Now that we have dealt with aerial toxins let's quickly give you help with cleaning and air freshening.

#### **The Basic Natural Cleansers:**

Vinegar-deodorize & disinfect

Baking Soda-mild abrasive

Borax, Washing Soda

Cut Lemon (or other citrus)-disinfect & bleach

Lemon juice-disinfect & bleach

Olive oil-wood cleanser & polish

Castile soap- the base for body cleansing

Witch-hazel-base for essential oil mist

Pumice stone-strong abrasive

Assorted herbs and spices

#### **Outdoor Protection**

History is full of useful "country knowledge" on pest repellents. Wives didn't put flower pots near window sills for show. The herbs they choose for the window were for cooking and to deter pests such as flies, fleas, mosquitoes, moths, and ants.

Granted the occasional bee would wander over for pollen but didn't care much to

enter the premises once their leg bucket was full of pollen.

Which are the best known for specific problem bugs?

**Flies:** Hang attractive groups of garlic heads, bundles of chili peppers. Occasional pots of marjoram, rosemary, sage, thyme, oregano, basil, mint, rue. Pull a few leaves rough them up and drop back in pot to increase the smell and protection from these plants. (If camping, it's a good idea to put sprigs of these plants in and around your food to keep the little critters away.)

**Ants:** Cayenne sprinkled around points of entry into your home, tucked in the brick breather slots. Replace when rain or wind washes away.

**Weevils:** Bay leaves tucked into rice, flour, cereal and dry bean containers.

**Fleas:** For You and Pets- Stuff their bed with walnut leaves, wormwood, feverfew, catmint (if pets are friendly), tansy, lavender, rosemary and sage. You may wish to make sure your pet tolerates these first. What good is a pet bed, if the pet refuses to sleep there because his/her nose is offended? Another option is to infuse one cup of boiling water with 1-3 teaspoons of herb for 10 minutes covered, then spritz your pet's body (stay behind the ears, dogs are sensitive). This method may need to be repeated a few times a day, let your nose judge. Of course, if you snuggle your furry friend consider your nose before treating. They and you will miss this part of companionship. Another option is steep

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herbs in distilled vinegar for 2-4 weeks then spray on pet and massage in skin for soothing treatment of bites, dandruff, dry skin and bugs. This can be done with lotions as well. The time can be shortened using a double boiler system (Crock pot and water bath).

**Mosquitoes:** Covering up your person is the best choice in many instances. However, in hot humid climates this may be uncomfortable. To create your own deterrent choose from geranium, cloves, peppermint, rosemary, eucalyptus or citronella. It's even possible to create small pot fires around patios and campfires, burn a few leaves in these pots from the desired plant choices to create a wonderful aroma and keep pest away from your activities. Don't lean over and sniff these burning herbs it may be too strong or you may be allergic and have a fast acting reaction. Let the aromas waft your way gradually.

**Moths:** Yup Moth balls, 'nough said. It is the smell of every good Granny attic. Unmistakable beginning and entry to all childhood treasure hunts. The odor itself is from Camphor. Sachets can be made with lemon, lavender, clove or rosemary. A simple handkerchief with any of the above herbs dried and wrapped within it will secure a whole drawer or box of clothes for several months to years but with a more tolerable effect when taken out to wear. If you need a more masculine touch try lining drawers and boxes with pine needles, cedar shavings or sassafras root chopped, place breathable fabric or newspaper over the plant product, tack down the corners, and

begin layering clothing or other materials for protection.

### ***In the Garden or Lawn, plant protection:***

Companion gardening is my favorite way to protect plants. I won't lie, every year I have to research what I want to plant and which plants work best together. Here are a few examples.

1. Carrots with leeks to repel both carrot and onion flies.
2. Radishes or kohlrabi with lettuce to repel earth flies
3. To repel aphids, plant nasturtiums around broccoli and bunches of chives among sunflowers and tomatoes to discourage infestations.
4. Planting bush beans with potatoes in alternating rows protects the spuds from the Colorado potato beetle and the beans from the Mexican bean beetle.

5. Broccoli and other cruciferous vegetables belonging to the cabbage family do well when companion planted with celery, dill, peppermint, sage and rosemary; as well as potatoes, onions and beets.

That was an example of how easily you can start creating a healthier garden.

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