

## PUT THE ACTION INTO SOCIAL ACTION

### GREEN TIP #9: USE HOUSEPLANTS TO REDUCE INDOOR POLLUTION AT HOME



The following tips appeared in an article by Rebecca Jeffreys in [Eco-Age](#), February 18, 2019.

Some might say that a plant makes a house a home. Besides being a great addition to any corner of a room, it's more sustainable than a bunch of flowers—providing you look after it correctly. Often, however, people buy house plants simply for aesthetic reasons, overlooking the many benefits that come with them.

Although we think that the four walls of our home protect us from the pollution, [indoor air has actually been shown](#) to hold harsh pollutants too. Many of them come from furniture, building materials and cleaning products. Research has indicated that certain house plants act as a natural filter to indoor pollution. In fact, there are over 50 houseplant types that remove pollutants and gases.

The benefits don't stop there; plants have also shown to lower stress levels at home and in the workplace and, if that's not enough, they help you sleep better, they help fight colds, they help you focus and they help improve your wellbeing.

Here are the top 10 plants that can improve your home's air quality:

1. [Areca Palm](#)  
Areca Palms filter out harsh chemicals, including acetone, xylene and toluene, found in products such as nail varnish, detergents, wooden furniture, poor ventilation, gasoline, cosmetics, etc.
2. [Philodendron](#)  
The Philodendron purifies air by removing formaldehyde, which occurs naturally in building materials and home furnishings and becomes threatening through long-term exposure by inhalation.

3. **Rubber Plant**

The Rubber Plants' large surface leaves absorb harsh chemicals, then break them down. The plant absorbs carbon dioxide and converts it into breathable oxygen.

4. **Peace Lily**

Peace Lilies improve indoor air quality by up to 60%. The plant reduces levels of mold spores, which commonly occur from dust inside, by absorbing them as food. It can be useful in areas of high humidity, like bathrooms for example, where it will keep the mold at bay.

5. **Dracaena**

Dracaena plants are one of the most effective air filters, removing formaldehyde, benzene, trichloroethylene and carbon dioxide—all linked to health problems. Dracaena plants also increase the humidity of a room which, in turn, helps control respiratory distresses.

6. **Snake Plant**

The Snake Plant is extremely effective in absorbing harsh chemicals like carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde and other harsh chemicals found in indoor air. It also produces oxygen, absorbs CO<sub>2</sub> at night and is beneficial for airborne allergies.

7. **Boston Fern**

In addition to being a natural air filter, the Boston Fern also restores natural moisture to the air. In fact, the plant's moisturizing properties have been effective for people with dry skin or irritable noses or throats.

8. **Aloe Vera**

The gel inside an Aloe Vera plant has been used for sunburns or skin conditions. This gel is anti-bacterial and packed full of vitamins. Additionally, the plant acts as a natural air purifier and reduces toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde and benzene—two chemicals present in cleaning products.

9. **English Ivy**

English Ivy can stimulate mucus glands and contains expectorant properties, which can help people with breathing difficulties. The leaves are to reduce blockage and swelling of airway passages. The plant also improves lung health, liver disorders, spleen disorders and others.

10. **Spider plant**

The Spider Plant is an antioxidant because it effectively removes ammonia, benzene, formaldehyde and xylene—harsh chemicals in cleaning products and furniture. The plant is extremely easy to grow and quickly improves air quality. A [study](#) found that within just two days, the plant removed up to 90% of the toxins found in indoor air.

So, if you want to breathe a little easier, try buying yourself some house plants, or if you already own some then you're one step ahead. In fact, [research](#) shows that older plants are actually better at processing out pollutants and purifying the air—so look after your plants and in turn, they'll look after you.

**GREEN CRAFT: MAKE YOUR OWN BUBBLES!**

*The following information was taken from an article by Chris Boehke in the Sunday, August 23, 2020, edition of the StarLedger.*



Looking for a fun summer project that really pops? Try making bubbles! People have been blowing bubbles for hundreds of years. In the 17th century, artists created paintings of children blowing bubbles with clay pipes. Bubbles weren't marketed and sold as a toy until the early 1900s, however. Chemtoy, a company that sold cleaning supplies, started bottling bubble solution in the early 1940s. Since then, many other companies started making bubbles. You don't need to buy bubble solution, however. You can make it yourself!

### **MATERIALS:**

- Liquid dish soap (Avoid any that say "ultra." Joy, Palmolive or Dawn "regular or original" brands work best.)
- Water (Tap water works fine, but distilled water is better)
- Glycerin or light corn syrup (Glycerin is usually found in the first aid section of grocery stores)
- A large, clean container

### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Pour six cups of water into your container.
2. Add one cup of dish soap to the water in the container and stir it slowly until the water and soap are mixed together.  
Don't stir it too hard or fast. You don't want foam or bubbles to form.
3. Add 1 tablespoon of glycerin or  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of corn syrup to the mixture.  
Stir the solution slowly to combine.
4. Let your solution sit overnight.

### **DON'T HAVE GLYCERIN? TRY THIS:**

- Four cups of warm water
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup dish soap
- A large, clean container

### **DIRECTIONS:**

1. Stir the sugar into the warm water until it dissolves.
2. Add the dish soap and slowly stir everything together until it is combined.
3. Let the solution sit overnight.
4. You can still add glycerin or corn syrup to this recipe.

5. Try adding  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of corn starch or one tablespoon of baking powder to make these bubbles a little stronger.

### **TIPS FOR BETTER BUBBLES:**

Add a few drops of food coloring to give your bubbles a little splash of color. If you make a big enough batch of bubble solution, you can store it in a cleaned plastic milk container.

### **IDEAS FOR EASY BUBBLE BLOWERS:**

- Plastic straws.
- Empty plastic bottles (you can cut the bottom off and blow through it or squeeze the bottle after dipping it into solution to push air out of the opening).



- A kitchen strainer.
- Straws strung with yarn or string tied together.
- Small mesh baskets.
- A paper towel tube.
- Rubber canning rings or metal jar lid rings.
- Pipe cleaners.



- Plastic coated wire hangers.
- Plastic six-pack rings.
- Cookie cutters.



- Cooking utensils such as spatulas, spoons with slots or a cheese grater.
- A tennis racket.
- Paper or styrofoam cups with holes cut in the bottom.



### **WHAT MAKES BUBBLES WORK?**

A bubble seems pretty simple, but it's actually got a lot going on. There are three layers on the outside of a bubble: soap, water and another layer of soap. When the water trapped between the layers of soap evaporates, the bubble pops. The glycerin or corn syrup in the bubble solution makes the soap thicker and bubbles stronger.

Bubbles that float in the air are always round. Why? The molecules that make up the soap stretch to a round shape to evenly space out the air inside. The soap is pulling in as the air inside of the bubble pushes out.