

HEALTH

Top 10 Indoor Plants For Cleaner Air

The more time we spend in the house, the more we need focus on keeping it clean, including the things we can't see. Houseplants are our often-overlooked helpers in ridding the air of pollutants and toxins. But many are effective allies in keeping your household air clean and pure.

It is suggested that one plant should be allowed for approximately 10 square yards of floor space, assuming average ceiling heights of 8 to 9 feet. This means that you need two or three plants to contribute to good air quality in the average domestic living room of about 20 to 25 square yards.

Research has shown that these 10 plants are the most effective all-around in counteracting offgassed chemicals and contributing to balanced internal humidity.

Here are some of the best air-purifying houseplants and the toxins they are most effective at reducing:

1. Bamboo Palm (*Chamaedorea seifritzii*)—benzene, formaldehyde, trichloroethylene (TCE)

2. Golden Pothos (*Chrysanthemum morifolium*)—This fast-growing vine is usually seen hanging in a cascade of green from baskets. You can pot it with a support, plant it in a hanging basket or train it to climb a trellis. It is



quite an addition to your home, with its dark green leaves and golden streaks. The plant needs bright, indirect light and is great at fighting pollutants such as formaldehyde, usually found in car exhaust fumes. Heads up: Golden pothos is a poisonous plant and should be kept away from small children and pets. It's not called the devil's ivy for nothing.

3. Common Ivy or English Ivy (*Hedera helix*)—benzene, formaldehyde, TCE, toluene, octane, terpene (the most effective plant against benzene according to NASA)

4. Ficus tree or Weeping fig (*Ficus benjamina*)—benzene, formaldehyde, TCE, octane, terpene

5. Acre Palm (*Dracaena massan-*

geana)—One of the most common indoor plants, the areca palm doesn't tolerate neglect too well. The soil needs to be kept moist for it to thrive. The plant, however, can survive on little sunlight. According to the NASA study, this plant filters out formaldehyde, xylene and toluene.

6. Peace lily (*Spathiphyllum*)—benzene, formaldehyde, TCE (Avoid lilies if you have cats – they can be toxic).

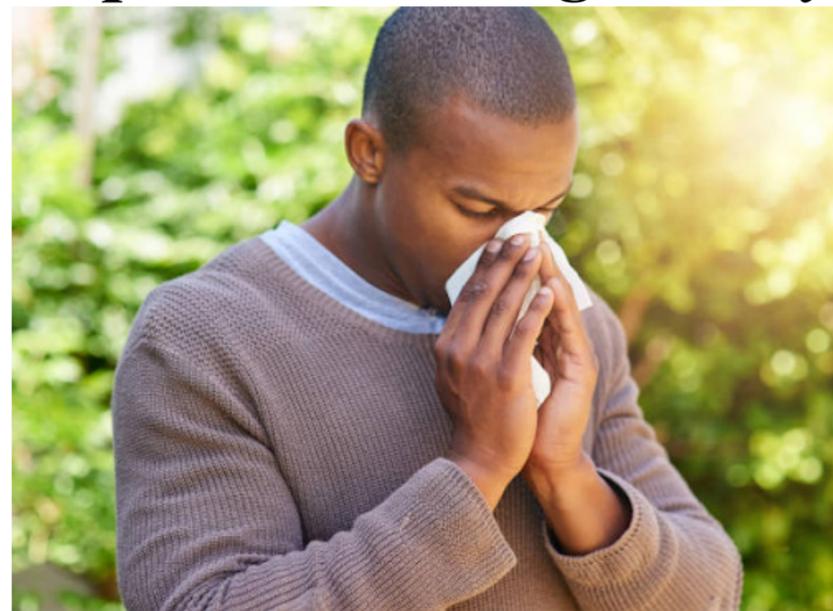
7. Purple heart (*Tradescantia pallida*)—benzene, TCE, toluene, terpene.

8. Red Ivy (*Hemigraphis alternata*)—benzene, TCE, toluene, octane, terpene.

9. Spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*, *Chlorophytum elatum*)—Commonly used to remove harmful chemicals such as benzene, formaldehyde, carbon monoxide and xylene from air, the "spider" is characterized by its tiny white flowers and rich foliage. Requiring low-maintenance and easy to grow, it thrives in cool to average home temperatures and prefers dry soil. Bright indirect sunlight keeps it growing best.

10. Wax plant (*Hoya carnosa*)—benzene, TCE, toluene, octane, terpene. (Source: BlackDoctor.Org/Felicia Vance, BDO Staff Writer)

Stop The Sneezing! 3 Ways To Avoid Spring Allergies



Some 35 million Americans suffer from sneezing, sniffing, stuffiness and itchy eyes due to spring allergies, according to experts from the American College of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology (ACAAI).

Why? "People with spring allergies often don't realize how many things can aggravate their allergy symptoms, so they just muddle along and hope for an early end to the season," says Dr. Myron Zitt, former ACAAI president, in a college news release. "But there's no reason to suffer. A few simple adjustments in habits and treatment can make springtime much more enjoyable."

Here are three ways to avoid spring

allergies.

Protect Your Surroundings

Allergists recommend allergy-sufferers keep their house and car windows closed so pollen can't drift in from outdoors.

They also recommend making sure to use the right air filter. Inexpensive central-furnace or air-conditioning filters and ionic electrostatic room cleaners aren't helpful, the allergists say. Ionic electrostatic air filters release ions that can irritate allergies.

And whole-house filtration systems can only be effective if the filters are changed regularly.

Additionally, you can limit your exposure to allergy triggers through the

following, according to the Mayo Clinic:

- Stay indoors on dry, windy days. The best time to go outside is after a good rain, which helps clear pollen from the air.
- Delegate lawn mowing, weed pulling and other gardening chores that stir up allergens.
- Remove clothes you've worn outside and shower to rinse pollen from your skin and hair.
- Don't hang laundry outside — pollen can stick to sheets and towels.
- Wear a pollen mask if you do outside chores.

Beware of Foods That Can Lead to Spring Allergies

The experts also note that some people with seasonal allergies may also suffer from allergies to closely related fruits, vegetables and nuts. This particularly relates to seasonal allergies due to grass or birch trees.

About one in five people with grass allergies and as many as 70 percent of people with birch allergies have these cross-reactions, known as pollen food allergy syndrome.

Understand the Triggers Behind Your Spring Allergies

People with allergies to birch or alder trees may experience tingling, itching and swelling around the mouth when they eat celery, cherries or apples.

People with grass allergies sometimes find tomatoes, potatoes or peaches problematic.

Although often not serious, reactions to these foods can be life-threatening in a small percentage of people. A life-threatening allergic reaction is

called anaphylactic shock. High-risk people should carry a portable epinephrine pen.

How to Get Relief From Symptoms

If you have been exposed to allergens, the following tips can help reduce your symptoms, according to Foothill Regional Medical Center:

• **AVOID DIETARY TRIGGERS.** Dietary triggers such as dairy, gluten, sugar, artificial sweeteners, and preservatives all can lead to increased inflammation in the nasal and respiratory pathways causing worse allergy symptoms.

• **SIP SOME APPLE CIDER VINEGAR.** Apple cider vinegar helps break up mucus in the body, letting you breathe again. Try diluting 1 to 2 tablespoons in a glass of water or with lemon juice.

• **EAT SOME PROBIOTICS.** Although mostly recognized for their use in balancing our gut bacteria, probiotics have been shown to support the immune system, which is also responsible for our allergic response to many triggers.

• **FLUSH YOUR NOSE.** Nasal irrigation is the draining of saline from one nostril through another in order to flush out the mucus. You can use sprays, bulb syringes, or Neti pots, which look like small teapots.

Allergists also encourage people to take their medicine even before their symptoms flare. It's also important to see an allergist who can suggest the best course of treatment. (Source: BlackDoctor.Org by Sydney James, BDO Staff Writer)

What Is Parkinson's? | 10 Early Signs of Parkinson's Disease

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a neurodegenerative disorder that affects predominately dopamine-producing ("dopaminergic") neurons in a specific area of the brain called substantia nigra.

Symptoms generally develop slowly over years. The progression of symptoms is often a bit different from one person to another due to the diversity of the disease. People with PD may experience:

- Tremor, mainly at rest and described as pill rolling tremor in hands. Other forms of tremor are possible
- Bradykinesia
- Limb rigidity
- Gait and balance problems

The cause remains largely unknown. Although there is no cure, treatment options vary and include medications and surgery. While Parkinson's itself is not fatal, disease complications can be serious. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) rated complications from PD as the 14th cause of death in the United States.

The first step to living well with Parkinson's disease is to understand the disease and the progression:

It is possible to have a good to great quality of life with PD. Working with your doctor and following recommended therapies are essential in successfully treating symptoms by using dopaminergic medications. People with PD need this medication because they have low levels or are missing dopamine in the brain, mainly due to impairment of neurons in the substantia nigra.

It is important to understand that

people with PD first start experiencing symptoms later in the course of the disease because a significant amount of the substantia nigra neurons have already been lost or impaired. Lewy bodies (accumulation of abnormal alpha-synuclein) are found in substantia nigra neurons of PD patients.

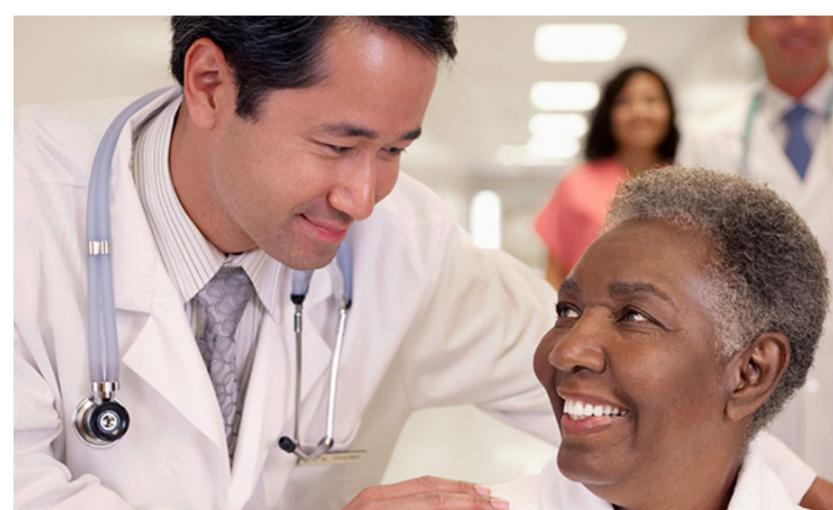
Scientists are exploring ways to identify biomarkers for PD that can lead to earlier diagnosis and more tailored treatments to slow down the disease process. Currently, all therapies used for PD improve symptoms without slowing or halting the disease progression.

In addition to movement-related ("motor") symptoms, Parkinson's symptoms may be unrelated to movement ("non-motor"). People with PD are often more impacted by their non-motor symptoms than motor symptoms. Examples of non-motor symptoms include: apathy, depression, constipation, sleep behavior disorders, loss of sense of smell and cognitive impairment.

In idiopathic Parkinson's disease, progression tends to be slow and variable. Doctors often use the Hoehn and Yahr scale to gauge the progression of the disease over the years. The scale was originally implemented in 1967 and it included stages zero to five, where zero is no signs of Parkinson's and five is advanced PD. It was later changed to become the modified Hoehn and Yahr scale.

Page reviewed by Dr. Ahmad Elkouzi, Movement Disorders Fellow at the University of Florida, a Parkinson's Foundation Center of Excellence.

10 Early Signs of Parkinson's



Disease

It can be hard to tell if you or a loved one has Parkinson's disease (PD).

Below are 10 signs that you might have the disease. No single one of these signs means that you should worry, but if you have more than one sign you should consider making an appointment to talk to your doctor.

1. Tremor

Have you noticed a slight shaking or tremor in your finger, thumb, hand or chin? A tremor while at rest is a common early sign of Parkinson's disease.

What is normal?

Shaking can be normal after lots of exercise, if you are stressed or if you have been injured. Shaking could also be caused by a medicine you take.

2. Small Handwriting

Has your handwriting gotten much smaller than it was in the past? You

may notice the way you write words on a page has changed, such as letter sizes are smaller and the words are crowded together. A change in handwriting may be a sign of Parkinson's disease called micrographia.

What is normal?

Sometimes writing can change as you get older, if you have stiff hands or fingers or poor vision.

3. Loss of Smell

Have you noticed you no longer smell certain foods very well? If you seem to have more trouble smelling foods like bananas, dill pickles or licorice, you should ask your doctor about Parkinson's.

What is normal?

Your sense of smell can be changed by a cold, flu or a stuffy nose, but it should come back when you are better. (Editor's Note: Read Part 2/Conclusion in 4/07/22 issue.)