

## Wintertime Indoors with Plants that Work for You

By Kate O'Lenic

### First, a question from our website [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net): Ask a Master Gardener

My granddaughter recently moved from Southern California to the Tri City Area of East Tennessee and is interested in flower gardening. Are there any books specific to flower gardening in East TN that I can purchase for her for Christmas?

Thank you for your help. Cecily

### Answer

Hi Cecily, thanks for the great question! Here are some suggestions you may want to check out:

***Bringing Nature Home:***

***How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants***

by Douglas W. Tallamy

***Garden Revolution:***

***How Our Landscapes Can Be a Source of Environmental Change***

by Larry Weaner & Thomas Christopher

***Planting in a Post-Wild World:***

***Designing Plant Communities for Resilient Landscapes***

by Claudia West and Thomas Ranier

***Wildflowers of Tennessee, the Ohio Valley and the Southern Appalachians***

by Tavia Cathcart and Dennis Horn

***Best Gardening Plants for Tennessee***

by Sue Hamilton, Director of the University of Tennessee Gardens

Any of the above books should be available on Amazon. Thanks again for the question

### Now on to indoor plants.

Growing herbs indoors is great, but there are other ways to benefit from indoor plants. Indoor plants may purify the air of toxins and cigarette smoke, they can produce oxygen, and give your office a nice homey feel. If you have the space, use several plants for both beauty and clean air benefits.

Improving air quality with indoor plants has been a subject of research at universities, EPA, and others. The folks at NASA studied plants to determine which ones might remove toxins from inside air to improve the air quality in space stations. All sorts of pollutants can come from furniture, chemicals, and paint. After researching which plants thrive indoors and which ones might filter the air of toxins, NASA developed a list of plants that may improve air quality. Non-toxic plants are noted and are good choices for the safety of pets and children.

Spider plant (*Chlorophytum comosum*): This low maintenance, non-toxic, self-propagating plant may remove several noxious chemical pollutants, including carbon monoxide and cigarette smoke. It also makes a great plant for the office, and pumps oxygen into the room.

Boston fern (*Nephrolepis exaltata 'Bostoniensis'*): A traditional favorite, this fern may be one of the most efficient at removing toxins. Its beautiful fronds are an added bonus and it is non-toxic.

Areca palm (*Chrysalidocarpus lutescens*): Another tropical, easy-care plant that may remove xylene, toluene, and formaldehyde. The fronds provide a textural element, and the multiple trunks add a special elegance to any room, and it is non-toxic.

Warneckii dracaena (*Dracaena deremensis 'Warneckii'*): This tall, upright, non-toxic beauty may eliminate toxins from varnishes and oils. It adds quite a dramatic touch with its deep green and white or yellow variegated leaves.

Heart leaf philodendron (*Philodendron cordatum*): This lovely, vining plant with its large heart-shaped leaves add softness to a room when draped over the edge of a pot.

These are just a few examples of plants that thrive indoors, add a touch of color and texture, and may even clean the air and boost oxygen indoors. Many of these plants are low maintenance. It's so easy to add plants indoors to boost your spirits during the winter while you ponder next spring's blooms!

### **Resources:**

"House Plants That Clean the Air," <https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/plants/houseplants/houseplants-that-clean-the-air.html>

<https://www.netmga.net/links/> resource Garden Guides <https://www.gardenguides.com/>

"Formaldehyde in Your Home: What you need to know,"  
<https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/formaldehyde/home/index.html>

### **How do I ask a question?**

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at [www.netmga.net](http://www.netmga.net). Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*