

Tip of the Week



Extension Tip of the Week (TOW)
February 11, 2008
Love is in the air, so is a lot of other stuff!

Due to improved construction methods, buildings are better sealed to maximize energy efficiency. Yet, these "sealed" buildings often trap gases from synthetic materials that can pollute the indoor air. These air pollutants can cause problems for inhabitants especially during the winter when people are forced to spend a great deal of time indoors.

Houseplants are currently receiving a lot of attention on improving indoor air quality. Ten years ago scientists from NASA discovered that plants could remove volatile organic chemicals (VOC) from the air inside sealed test chambers. While most of our homes are not sealed like the "biohome" that NASA created, everyone can benefit from removal of VOCs by plants. Dr. Wolverton, author of *How to Grow Fresh Air*, states, "Houseplants are no longer luxuries, but essential to health."

The gases most often studied include formaldehyde, benzene, xylene, toluene, ammonia, acetone, methyl alcohol, ethyl acetate, and trichlorethylene. The amount of purification depends on the plant being tested. Different houseplants purify different toxic chemicals to differing degrees.

For a list of plants proven to improve indoor air quality by removing harmful chemicals check out the site below.

Excerpt taken from ISU's Horticulture and Home Pest News:
<http://www.ipm.iastate.edu/ipm/hortnews/2001/4-13-2001/houseplants.html>

Tip of the Week (TOW) is emailed out weekly by Sherry McGill, ISU Extension Education Director in Woodbury County. To have the TOW emailed to you directly, please email Sherry at mcgills@iastate.edu.

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