



HEALTHY PLANTS

IN THE WORKPLACE



**Health effects of plants
in the workplace**

Dry throat? Burning eyes? Recurrent headaches? Plants improve your working environment !

Indoor climate

It is often difficult to completely control the indoor climate in an office. It can easily become too hot, too cold, too dry or too damp. Furthermore, it can never be perfect for everyone: what one person finds too hot is too cold for someone else.

In addition printers, copiers, computer monitors, floor coverings, paint and wallpaper release substances into the air which affect the quality of the indoor climate.

The potential consequences of poor air quality are well known: irritated eyes, headache, skin complaints and dry membranes in the nose and mouth. This is not only unpleasant, it is also unhealthy.



Winter or summer

In winter, when the heating is running at maximum, it is the lack of moisture in the air which causes problems. Most people find a relative humidity of between 30% and 60% pleasant. But many offices do not even achieve the lower level of 30% in winter months. It is no fun indoors in the summer either. Sealed climate control systems with non-opening windows means that you cannot control the environment yourself. Even in offices with the latest climate control systems, more than a quarter of the staff are dissatisfied with the temperature or the humidity.

What can you do about it?

Yet you can easily improve the indoor climate. Use plants! Plants help create a healthy workplace and a healthy indoor climate. Not only do they put water vapour back into the air, they also absorb heat and filter dust and harmful substances out of the air. Some indoor palms give off a lot of water, and sword ferns and gerberas cleanse the air of the formaldehyde released by building materials, paper and furniture. Other good air-purifying plants are the rubber plant, English ivy and date palm.



Which plants?

Different plants have different effects – some purify and some humidify the air. Plants with a high level of water consumption can increase humidity by to 15%. Recommended plant types to purify the air are: Parlour Palm, Kentia Palm, Ficus, Ivy, Boston fern, Philodendron, Spathiphyllum and Mother-in-law's Tongue. Recommended plant types to humidify the air are: Ferns like Boston fern, African Hemp, Cyperus and other grasses, Spider plant, Bamboo and Spathiphyllum

Fewer complaints, less illness

The effect of plants in the workplace has been the subject of repeated scientific investigation. Time after time the conclusion is the same: plants work! One study looked at the effect of plants on the health of staff in the radiology department of a Norwegian hospital. Once plants were placed in the department and artificial daylight was introduced, the level of health complaints amongst those studied fell noticeably. This resulted in a permanent reduction in absence due to illness from 15% to 5% within 6 months.

Symptom	Reduction in complaints (%)
Eye irritations	- 15%
Dry throat	- 31%
Fatigue	- 32%
Cough	- 38%
Headache	- 45%

Less stress

The presence of plants does not just affect the indoor climate. Researchers have discovered that a view of greenery can result in a demonstrable reduction in stress within five minutes. Research in the Netherlands has shown that people who spend more than four hours a day working at a computer monitor feel better and are more productive with plants in the workplace!

The green view

Hospital patients with a view of greenery recover more quickly than patients who do not have such a view. The view of greenery produces a calming and relaxed feeling.

A green indoor environment

Companies are increasingly willing to accept that they have a key role to play in protecting the environment and the welfare of their employees, and therefore often strive for a 'green' image. Presenting such an image starts with a healthy indoor environment. Plants at work fit perfectly within the area of company policy which nowadays is labelled 'health management'. As an employee, you can hold your employer to account on this.

Improve your workplace

Anyone wishing to do themselves, their colleagues and their business a healthy favour will ensure that there are plants in the workplace. This guarantees a better working atmosphere, but above all a healthier climate in which to work. The benefits for your employer are also substantial: less absence due to illness and better performance.

'Healthy plants in the workplace' is a 7 step plan, developed as part of an EU project, for implementing a programme for plants at work.. It is a useful tool which will help a company move from concept to practice. Ask you employer about it!

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