

Winter is the worst time of year for indoor air pollution problems since most homes don't get fresh air and people spend more time inside.

The Environmental Protection Agency recently noted that, "in the last several years, a growing body of scientific evidence has indicated that the air within homes and other buildings can be more seriously polluted than the outdoor air in even the largest and most industrialized cities."

The nation's largest lawn, landscape, and interiorscape association, the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), offers homeowners tips for improving indoor air quality through the use of indoor plants.

"All plants add oxygen and create a healthier indoor environment," says Chris Raimondi, chairman of PLANET's Interior Specialty Group. "In addition, some plants provide the added benefit of removing toxins from the air."

PLANET suggests trying the following plants in the home to provide oxygen and remove toxins:

- Ivy—It likes indirect light, to be evenly watered, and doesn't mind drying-out occasionally.
- Spider plants—They are great pollution fighters that are easy to grow in moderate light, and they attract few insects.
- Peace Lilies—They are easy to care for, should be kept moist, and will wilt when they need to.
- Ferns—They need medium or bright indirect light. The Boston fern is a good pollution-fighting variety, but requires little maintenance aside from dealing with dropped fronds.
- Ficus trees—They need medium to high light. They shouldn't be watered until their leaves begin to turn yellow. They are sensitive to changes in light and cold drafts, but once established, they are easy to care for.

For those who want some color around the house, chrysanthemums and Gerbera daisies are flowering plants that clean the air while they are flowering, but they eventually need to be discarded, whereas most green indoor plants can last for years.

Aside from their homes, many people spend the majority of time at the office. Raimondi, a green industry landscape industry certified manager, suggests that companies place plants in the work place to improve the air quality along with employee health and morale.

Some of the most popular indoor plants for the office are Peace Lilies and philodendrons. Many offices opt for a large quantity of plants in a public area, but a person can also keep smaller plants on their desk to aid in cleaning the air in a direct area. One to two plants per room are recommended.

For more information, or to find a green industry professional, log on to LandcareNetwork.org/findaprofessional.