

Houseplants to Brighten Winter

Just because it's cold and dreary outside doesn't mean you have to hang up your green thumb for the winter. Houseplants can provide cleaner air, boost your mood and promote healing, according to Healthline. Keep reading for tips on how to start your own indoor garden.

CONSIDER YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Make note of how much sun your place gets, how much room you have for plants and how much time you can devote to them. You don't need to know your growing zones so much for this, unless you plan on eventually moving your plants outside, but you do need to know if you can get some bright light-loving plants or need to look for those that can take lower light. If you have pets or small children, you also want to consider the toxicity of some houseplants. The ASPCA maintains a great list for furry friends. Children should be



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taught not to pick leaves or berries and stick them in their mouths. If you suspect a child has eaten a poisonous plant, call the Poison Control Center immediately at (800) 222-1222.

PICK EASY PLANTS

Here are five suggestions from the experts at Good Housekeeping.

- Chinese money plant (*Pilea peperomioides*) also goes by

the nickname pancake plant for its flat leaves on long stems. Stick it in a shady spot and water weekly. It will offshoot baby plants that you can replant.

- Air plants, or tillandsia, don't even need dirt to grow. Toss them in water for a couple of hours every 10 days or so. That's it. All done.

- ZZ plants (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) is a native of Africa

and tolerates drought, low light and low humidity — indestructible.

- Chinese evergreens, which are in the aglaonema family, can take a lot of love, if by love you mean water. If you tend to kill plants by overwatering, this one's for you.

- Calatheas, or prayer plants, feature showy, colorful leaves that show off amid plain green house plants. Keep it moist but

not drowned and avoid bright light.

BENEFITS OF KEEPING HOUSEPLANTS

Loving and nurturing houseplants can help you concentrate better, calm you down, boost your memory and make you happier, according to a study from Texas A&M University. This can be especially helpful during the dreary winter months, when many people suffer from seasonal depression. The study also found that keeping plants improves relationships and feelings of compassion. People who care for nature are more likely to care for others, the study says, and can increase your perceived quality of life.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE A BLACK THUMB?

So you tried. You went to all the nurseries, you read all the books, you still killed the plants. Or maybe your lifestyle isn't conducive to keeping plants in your home, say if you travel too much or you have curious pets. A Stanford University study from 2015 suggests that even looking at green settings in art or pictures may help give you some of the benefits from keeping houseplants. Try switching your computer desktop to a lush setting or grab a coffee break by a window.



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REAL ESTATE 101



Green Up to Sell

Houseplants can even help sell your house. Your Realtor probably told you to clear out all your personal clutter, and your home may feel and look a little empty. Houseplants can bring the outdoors — and a sense of scale and warmth — back in. If you've got tall ceilings, opt for spindly cactuses or indoor trees. It also gives buyers the impression that your home was loved and cared for.

HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

Open listing: a listing under which the principal (owner) reserves the right to list his property with other brokers, yet grants the real estate agent the right to advertise and sell the property.

SOURCE: MLS.com

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