



Just one plant will remove the nasties from the air we breathe indoors, and, size does not matter!

New studies from the University of Technology Sydney indicate that any plant can improve indoor air quality and the size of the pot or plant does not matter above 200mm. And with air indoors generally being more polluted than outdoors, that is important news!

"We have found that a plant in a 200mm pot is just as effective as one in a 250mm or 300mm in removing Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) and it seems that any plant will perform as well as others," reports Adjunct Professor Margaret Burchett from the University of Technology Sydney.

"This is important news - it means that any indoor room or office which is air-conditioned or closed for much of the time, can really benefit from having just one 200mm pot plant in the space - and amazingly it will clean the air of the VOCs within 24 hours."

Professor Burchett says we do not realise that the indoor air environment is more polluted than the air outside, as it contains pollutants brought in from outside - mainly fossil fuel pollutants - plus it picks up the indoor pollutants.

VOCs are emitted by almost all objects and finishes indoors - from plastics in computers, televisions, from most paints and from most carpets - and in turn tiny bacteria found in the potting mix 'eat up' the compounds.

"People do not realise that here in Australia, in urban areas people spend 90% of their time indoors and the quality of indoor air is now more important than ever. Our studies and those from overseas confirm that our natural air filters - pot plants - can make a real difference to maintaining air quality, and directly improving the well-being of people," said Professor Burchett.

The new studies looked at different varieties of plants and different pot and plant sizes and their uptake of the different VOCs which we would commonly find in indoor air.

"The whole plant system is acting as nature's air filter. The micro-organisms need a healthy plant and root system to grow and different ones absorb different gases that are toxic to us. As well, their role in removing CO₂ from the air and adding oxygen means that they are the greenest way of improving indoor air quality," said Professor Burchett.

"With effective use of indoor plants to absorb VOCs, carbon dioxide and carbon monoxide from air-conditioned CBD environments, they can play a role in reducing the carbon footprint of our city buildings."

A major sponsor of the UTS research has been Ambius, one of the world's largest suppliers of indoor plants.

"In addition to Professor Burchett's research, other research from around the world clearly shows that indoor plants have a positive effect on the people who occupy the same spaces - they contribute to employee productivity, reduce sick days and make a direct contribution to the bottomline of a business," reports Ambius Regional Director for the Asia Pacific Region, Mr Ray Borg.

Independent recognition of the role of indoor plants is growing, with the Green Building Council now awarding two points towards green star ratings for indoor plant installations.