

Plants Rule! When It Comes to Living Green, Plants Are King

From the rain forest in the Amazon to a fern in your bedroom, plants rule as the ‘king of green.’ Whether it’s a majestic oak, a Knock Out rose or a Norfolk Island pine, plants provide us with fresh oxygen and absorb harmful carbon dioxide. Call it the healthiest “co-dependant relationship” in the natural world.



“Gardeners want their plants and landscapes to benefit the environment, not pose a potential risk to it,” says Steve Hutton, president of The Conard Pyle Co./Star Roses.

Here are a few simple solutions for living “green” in your home -- both indoors and out:

Plant Something

Go green in your garden with an eye toward preserving and sustaining our natural resources. “A single tree, shrub, bush, or container will help the environment,” says Hutton. “And, it’s one of the easiest ways you can make a difference because plants prevent soil erosion, control water cycles, and moderate temperatures.” And remember to choose the right plants for the right spot to maintain their viability.

Green is in the Air

Plants are natural air filters and have a unique ability to combat indoor air pollution. Researchers with NASA have concluded that houseplants absorb harmful organic compounds and chemicals found in many homes and offices.

According to the journal *Natural Health*, leading experts recommend placing one houseplant per 100 square feet in your office and home. Great plants for cleaning the air, and giving back CO₂, are ferns, anthuriums, weeping figs, dracaena and lustrous Peace Lilies.

Drink Responsibly



“Everyone can have a green thumb and conserve water,” says Jose Smith, CEO of Costa Farms, a company that offers an array of water conserving shrubs and trees, annuals and perennials. In the long run, these plants use less water while still producing lush color, abundant blooms and rich foliage.

Costa Farms (www.costafarms.com) recommends viburnum, bougainvillea, blue daze, cosmos, and lantana, which offer gorgeous borders, add interest to rock gardens, and provide

excellent ground cover. And don't forget the succulents. They transform gardens into breathing sculptures that add visual interest, require little water, are easy to grow and eco-trendy.

Say No to Drugs

Rather than slathering on the pesticides for your lawns, consider perennials and native plants, which require little maintenance. Plants like Tickled Pink (www.starplants.com) and the famous Knock Out Family of Roses (www.theknockoutrose.com) will thrive without additional chemicals and pesticides, and are wise choices for the eco-savvy consumer.

Garden from the Ground Up

To have healthy plants and lush containers, start with nutrient-rich soils, mulch and compost. For your containers, use a good potting soil-- preferably organic, like Organic Mechanics Potting Soil, (www.organicmechanicsoil.com). This peat-free blend promises to improve plant performance by feeding the plants and keeping the soil moist longer.

Garden for the Birds and the Bees



There's been a lot of buzz lately about the alarming decrease in the bee population. Bees and butterflies play a key role in maintaining our eco-system.

According to Treehugger.com, bees pollinate 35 percent of the world's crop production and increase the output of 87 of the leading food crops worldwide. So remember to be "butterfly and bee friendly."

Honeybees, especially, are drawn to Caryopteris "Grand Bleu," a lovely shrub introduced by Conard-Pyle, which has gorgeous blooms and stunning color. And be kind to our feathered friends by planting perennials like holly. Birds flock to Blue Hollies like Blue Angel and Blue Maid, which are attractive and drought-resistant, provide large berries for the birds, and

maintain their color through seasons.

Size Matters

Even the smallest spaces can be alive with color and life and give back oxygen to our environment, while they enrich our lives. "Create a small garden on your patio or rooftop, wherever there's plenty of sunlight," says Peter Cilio, of Campania International (www.campaniainternational.com).

Containers create visual appeal and allow you to group plants according to design, complementary colors and eco-friendly choices like cactus and succulents. Campania's Cast Stone collection of containers and urns is made with natural materials, and provides sophistication, flair and whimsy. Their sleek and contemporary cast stone fountains are a great solution for adding water to a small space.

For more tips on living green inside and out with plants, please visit www.gardenmediagroup.com or www.bhgaturesgarden.com.