Which Indoor Plants Purify Air?

Let’s get one thing straight. You probably won’t improve your home’s air quality by filling it with indoor plants that can purify the air. According to a National Geographic piece from

2019, houseplants won't do much to clean your home's air.

Most of the advice about air-purifying houseplants comes from an old NASA study. In a 2019 article in the Atlantic, Robinson Meyer reports that the study was indeed on the up and up, but it doesn't quite translate to the real world. Plants do have cleaning abilities, but they just can't handle cleaning an entire room, let alone a whole house of pollutants. Cleaning the air in your entire house would necessitate becoming a plant hoarder—which, come to think of it, isn't a terribly unappealing idea.

It's no surprise that this myth about indoor plants that can purify air has proliferated online. I believed it at one point! NASA did a study? It must be true! Unfortunately, that study results have taken on a life of their own. People love to talk about the air purifying qualities of plants.

But unless you're filling your home from floor to ceiling with plants—eliminating a clear path to walk—your pretty house plants aren't doing much to clean the air. You're better off investing in an air purifier if you're worried about air quality.

Houseplants still have a variety of benefits, though! They're attractive and are an inexpensive way to spruce up a room. They make great gifts, and research even shows that having houseplants can help boost your mental health.

A Brief Word About Air Quality

In-home air quality is a complicated thing. Gardeners love to spend time outdoors but did you know that keeping your windows open can contribute to poor indoor air quality? If there's a lot of traffic nearby or the air is particularly bad outside, letting it in will only serve to tank the air quality in your home.

Other things that can contribute to poor air quality include:

- Cooking
- Faulty appliances
- Fuel-burning appliances, like a gas stove or furnace
- New construction
- Household products like cleaning supplies and candles
- Mold

Don’t let their lack of air-purifying abilities dissuade you from acquiring houseplants. They certainly won’t make your air worse. Here’s a video that goes through some of the easiest houseplants to take care of. Bonus: they’re also some of the easiest to find for cheap!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy3oE5xAivY