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Office foliage for feel good factor

By Nick Easen for CNN

(CNN) -- Watering your Peace Lily and talking to your Dwarf Date Palm could improve your office life.

Putting plants in the workplace could be one way to celebrate Earth Day, but research shows that it may also promote staff well being.

If your job makes you feel dreary, it could be time to introduce vegetation to your personal breathing zone -- an area of six to eight cubic feet (0.2 cubic meters) -- where we spend most of our working day.

Office plants have become more popular over the last 30 years, with research reinforcing the belief that they improve the atmosphere, reduce stress, and sharpen concentration.

Aside from boosting oxygen, indoor plants such as yuccas, lilies and palms also remove airborne toxins emitted by carpets, furniture, paints, and other synthetic products in the office. They could also alleviate health claims relating to "Sick Building Syndrome."

"If every employee urges their boss to adopt new plants, they will be greatly appreciated for the sug-

gestion," says M.J. Gilhooley from Plants at Work, a U.S.-based education campaign, which promotes office vegetation.

Plants release moisture into the air alleviating the dry atmosphere generated by air-conditioning and central heating units, as well as computers.

Leaves, stems, roots and microorganisms in the potting mix also act as a filtering system. During photosynthesis -- the process when the plant absorbs carbon dioxide and gives off oxygen -- organic tissue absorbs airborne toxins.

Plants at work may also stimulate employees' concentration by reducing excess carbon dioxide.

A study by Professor Derek Clements-Croome at the University of Reading, England compared the performance of schoolchildren in classrooms with and without plants. Better results were achieved in classrooms with vegetation, the study said.

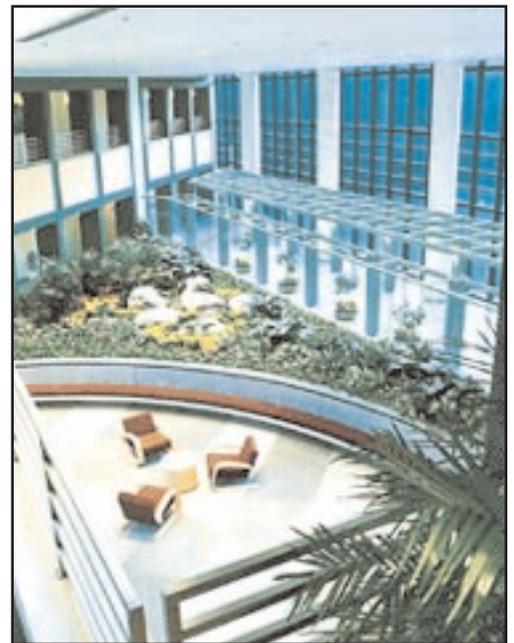
Absenteeism relating to "Sick Building Syndrome" also decreased when plants were part of the office, according to research by Professor Tove Fjeld of the Agricultural University in Oslo, Norway.

And Jon Naar, author of "Design for A Livable Planet," suggests that

15 to 20 plants are enough to clean the air in a 1,500 square foot office area (139 square meters).

But if the unkempt office plant in the corner is left untended it can soon turn into a health hazard.

"Mould (on plants) can irritate asthma, increase upper respiratory problems, cause headaches and affect concentration," Dr. David Miller an expert on indoor air quality from Carleton University, Canada told the Globe and Mail newspaper.



Office plants may do wonders for your work environment as long as they are healthy.

**Good removers of airborne toxins
include:**

- Chlorophyllum elatum
- Rhaps palm
- Dracaena marginata
- Ficus robusta
- Musa cavendishii
- Spathiphyllum
- Philodendron
- Codiaeum
- Dieffenbachia
- Scindapsus