

Healthy Indoor Environments

Where We Live, Learn and Play

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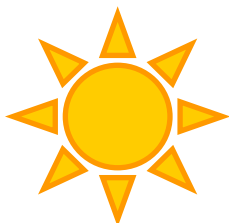


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Sun Safety Resources

- [Sun Safety and Protection Tips](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2020)
- [Sun Safety](#) (CDC, 2020)
- [Sun Safety for Parents](#) (KidsHealth, 2020)



Are Indoor Plants Effective Air Purifiers?

Written by Candace Tucker, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Coweta County

You may be spending more time in your home during the pandemic. During this time, you could be thinking about ways to make your space cleaner, including the indoor air you breathe. What first comes to mind to most people is indoor plants. But before you head straight to the plant nursery, there are a few things to keep in mind.

There is an idea that indoor plants act as an effective air purifier for your home.

However, contrary to popular belief, research has found this not to be the case. How so, you may ask? Studies conducted on indoor plants looked at their ability to remove volatile organic compounds (VOCs) —pollutants— in small, sealed chambers, not entire homes. Results from these studies found that the number of VOCs did drop, but they did so at a very slow rate. To further investigate these findings, reviewers compared clean air delivery rates of indoor potted plants to the outdoor-to-indoor air exchange that typically occurs in homes and buildings. They found that it would take 10 plants per square foot of space to have the same effect as one hour of outdoor-to-indoor air exchange! Not to mention, having that many plants in your home may open the door for mold and pest issues.

So, what else can you do to purify the air in your home besides opening your doors or windows? Ventilate! A well-ventilated home filters and then circulates clean, fresh air to reduce your exposure to VOCs, allergens, mold, carbon monoxide, and more. All of which promotes better respiratory health for you and your family. UGA Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Healthy Housing experts recommend the following tips to keep your home well-ventilated:

- Use kitchen and bath exhaust fans when cooking and bathing.
- Make sure your exhaust works properly.
- Change air filters regularly on heating/cooling units.
- Clean dryer lint traps.
- For fireplaces, make sure the flue is clear and open when a fire is lit.

Even though indoor plants are not the best choice for air purification, they do offer mental health benefits. Numerous studies have found that regular exposure to nature in any form can reduce stress and increase your overall happiness. The bottom line is to use plants sparingly in your home, keep your home well-ventilated, and remember that the great outdoors has just as much beauty to offer.



Image Source: Pixabay

FIND a Way to Declutter Your Home

Written by Pamela R. Turner, FACS Extension Housing & Environment Specialist

There is no one way to reduce clutter in your home. We are all different and the key is to FIND the level of clutter that you and your household can live with. Don't be overwhelmed with guilt for not being able to get rid of almost everything and live a minimalist lifestyle. It's okay. The important thing is to create a safe and healthy home. This means reducing tripping and falling hazards, and making sure you aren't providing too many places for dust to collect.

There are three key steps to reducing clutter in your life.



Image Source: Pamela Turner

1. FIND a manageable level of clutter for you and your household.
2. FIND what motivates you to reduce clutter.
3. FIND a clutter reduction method that works for you.

What motivates you to declutter your home may be very different than what motivates your friends and family. Maybe you need to make some extra money. You can do this by cancelling auto-shipments, buying fewer items, and of course selling some of your things, especially those items that you have stored in a closet or garage. Maybe you want to be more organized and not spend so much time searching for lost items. Being organized can help reduce stress and provide an overall sense of well-being.

The road to a decluttered life can be challenging, so don't get discouraged or give up. It's okay to be different and have a higher level of tolerance for clutter. Start making changes from where you are at right now. There is no right or wrong way. By Focusing on Important Necessities in your Dwelling (FIND), you will also FIND happiness, money, and lost items, all while improving your mental health and well-being, as well as your personal relationships. Learn more about decluttering your home and take the FIND quiz at find.uga.edu.

Quick Tips to Declutter Your Home

Use these tips and tricks to get started on the process of decluttering your home!

1. **5 Things in 5 Minutes:**
Set a timer and find 5 things to put away or throw away in 5 minutes.
2. **Declutter in Intervals:**
Declutter for 20 minutes, then take a 10 minute break.
3. **Out with the Old, In with the New:**
For every new item brought into your house, one old item must be removed.



Electrical Safety

Written by Becca Stackhouse, FACS Agent, UGA Extension Crisp County

Did you know what is behind your walls matters? Electricity is an important part of our lives and the modern conveniences we enjoy, like automobiles, lights, heat, phones, and appliances. Electricity isn't something to be afraid of, but we need to be aware of potential hazards and how to protect our loved ones.

Each year, electrical manufacturers account for 35,000 home fires causing over 1,130 injuries, 500 deaths, and \$1.4 billion in property damage. Most, if not all, of these fires could be prevented through careful maintenance and keeping electrical equipment maintained. The average American home was built in 1977, and simply cannot handle the demands of today's electrical appliances and devices.

So, how can you tell if your electrical system is operating efficiently? The typical signs of an overloaded electrical system include the following:

- Frequent tripping of circuit breakers or blowing of fuses
- Lights dimming when other devices are turned on
- Buzzing sound from switches or outlets
- A discoloration around outlets
- Appliances that don't operate efficiently, and seem to be underpowered.



Image Source: Pixabay

It is important to pay attention to these indicators of a poorly performing electrical system in your home. If you notice any of these things in your home, then you should have your home inspected by a licensed electrician.

There are things you can do to avoid overloading the circuits. One of the first things you can do is to label the circuit breakers, so you know what each circuit controls. You can reduce your electrical load by using energy-efficient appliances and lighting. If you have a high energy use device, have a licensed electrician install a new circuit.

Remember:

You can promote electrical safety in your home by doing the following:

- Labeling the circuit breakers
- Using energy-efficient appliances and lighting



Healthy Home Hacks

Scuff marks on vinyl flooring can be removed by rubbing the mark with a clean, dry tennis ball.
~Pamela Turner

Used dryer sheets work great to shine mirrors and fixtures. ~Pamela Turner

Broken glass can be picked up by pressing a piece of soft bread on it. ~Pamela Turner

Remove small marks on furniture with toothpaste. Rub toothpaste on the scratched area in a circular motion until it buffs out, then clean the area with a damp towel. ~Sydney Kronaizl

Coffee filters make great dusters for televisions and computer monitors. ~Pamela Turner

Shaving cream will remove water stains in the shower. Spray, let sit on the surface for 15 minutes, then wipe off. ~Pamela Turner

Use washi tape, duct tape, or colored masking tape to label chargers and other such cords so you can quickly and accurately identify them. ~Sydney Kronaizl

Remove crayon marks from the wall by warming the area with a hairdryer to soften the wax. Wipe off with a soft cloth. ~Pamela Turner

Slice lemons and limes and add them to a simmering pot of water to infuse your home with a fresh citrus scent. ~Sydney Kronaizl



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