

Plants for the (WELLBEING) Win

These green beauties do much more than look pretty on your sill

By Tara Ali

Plants are big news RN. From sweet succulents on your brunch table to leafy monsteras in offices, gardening is no longer a hobby reserved for Jamie Durie. In fact, Australia's inaugural A-Z of Instagram report showed that #GreenThumbs is one of the biggest trends among millennials and we're now spending more than our parents on pot plants. "As our lives become busier and our cities increasingly dominated by hard surfaces, it's no surprise we're wanting more nature in our lives," says Jason Chongue, plant cultivator and author of *Green: Plants for small spaces, indoors and out* (Hardie Grant, \$32.99). Greenery in your personal space has also been linked to health benefits, including higher happiness and air quality (although a recent review by Drexel University in the US suggests you'd need between 10 and 1000 plants per square metre of your home to get cleaner air - don't tempt us...). Whether you're a newbie or fully fledged #plantlady, check out the wellness boosters worth investing in.



THE AIR FRESHENER Spider Plants

In a famous '80s NASA study on plants and air pollution, spider plants came out tops, removing 95 per cent of the toxic substance from a sealed plexiglass chamber in 24 hours. Since then, other plants have been shown to clean up air contaminants (which come from everyday things such as adhesives, ceiling tiles and new furniture), but "spider plants remain an old favourite, adored by many. If you spot one in the house of friends or family, ask for a cutting", says Chongue. Spideys are adorable as they grow little offshoot babies from their leaves.

TREAT IT RIGHT
Water once a week in warmer months and once a fortnight in cooler ones.

THE SKIN MOISTURISER Peace Lily

All plants clean up indoor air, but peace lilies do the extra work of raising relative humidity levels in the room, which means they can help offset skin dryness brought on by heaters and temperature fluctuations. A paper published in *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health* found that because peace lilies are 'thirsty' plants that require more water to grow well, they restore moisture in the air - meaning you can reap the good humidity benefits.

TREAT IT RIGHT
Peace lilies are ideal plants for beginners, as they'll visually tell you when they need care: dropping leaves means they need a drink. Keep them in a warm spot, away from fans and the air con blast.

THE BURN-TREATING BAD-ARSE Aloe Vera

This evergreen medicinal succulent has been used to treat various skin conditions for thousands of years. Snap off a centimetre, squeeze out the gel and apply topically to soothe superficial burns, like when your Ghd catches your ear. You can also tackle acne and spots - a study in the *Journal of Dermatological Treatment* found a cream combining conventional acne medication with aloe vera gel was significantly more effective than the acne med alone or a placebo.

TREAT IT RIGHT
Aloe vera requires minimal care, says Chongue. "Ensure it has similar conditions as it would in the wild - bright to harsh light, and watered sparingly."

THE HERBAL MEDICINE Parsley

It may not get the props of kale, but parsley (in any form: curly or flat) is an unsung health hero. "As well as adding an alluring aroma to your food, parsley contains significant amounts of vitamins A, C and K, and polyphenols; compounds with antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties," says Alana Langan, cofounder and director of Ivy Muse, a botanical wares studio in Melbourne (check out their seriously luscious Insta @ivymuse_melb). Parsley also contains myricetin, a flavanol that has been linked to the prevention of certain cancers, according to a study from *South Asian Journal of Cancer*.

TREAT IT RIGHT
"A sunny windowsill is the ideal spot, and give it plenty of water," says Langan.

THE STRESS BUSTER Weeping Fig

"Plants are more than just styling pieces," says Chongue. "Tasks like watering, pruning and repotting benefit your wellbeing by allowing your mind to focus on the beauty of nature. It's therapeutic." A study in the *Journal of Physiological Anthropology* found that interacting with indoor plants can reduce psychological and physiological stress. So, placing a big plant, such as a weeping fig, in your work space could help to knock back anxiety levels. "They also have an impressive ability to remove toxins from the air," says Langan. [rch](#)

TREAT IT RIGHT
"Pair it with a medium-size bushy-shaped plant (such as a peace lily) and a smaller plant (like mother-in-law's tongue) to create a striking trio among your plant gang," says Langan.

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The percentage by which being around plants boosts memory retention. See you at the nursery!

SOURCE: UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN