

Bring the plants in

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The office lifestyle means long hours sitting down and usually 'glued' to a computer screen and often breathing stale air.

Dr Fraser Torpy, a lecturer at the UTS School of Environment at the University of Technology in Sydney has been studying the impact of indoor plants on indoor air quality and well being for some years. He confirms that indoor air can often be more polluted than the air outdoors even in cities. This is due to the number of harmful toxins emitted by synthetic materials used to furnish our offices. The toxins or to give them their correct collective name, Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are released by furniture, upholstery, floor coverings, computers as well as paper products and cleaning materials.

The toxins can cause headaches, loss of concentration and more. Carbon dioxide is one of the VOCs released and this can cause drowsiness too. "Our research proves that plants can reduce potentially harmful VOCs by 80% and CO₂ by up to 25%, so the health benefits are significant," says Torpy, who has 15 plants in his office. "Plants can also reduce dust levels, refresh air and stabilise temperature and humidity levels.

"This cleaner air leads to clearer thinking which in turn promotes greater productivity and efficiency."

It's more than clean air and wellbeing The article also reports on Dr Craig Knight's research undertaken at The University of Exeter in conjunction with Ambius. He found that employees working in planted offices generally felt more comfortable at work and were 15% more productive. N B Our synopsis of his research shows an increase in productivity of up to 32%. 'Kate Levy, from Ambius Indoor Plants Australia, found that plants are the first thing to get cut in hard times.

"They're seen as a discretionary expense. This is why we focus on the fact that we're not in the business of making pretty offices. Plants make people more productive, improve air quality, and make employees



happier. It's not about the image – it's about your employees.”

‘Earlier this year, Ambius stopped 1500 office workers in the street in Sydney and Brisbane and asked them if they had plants in their offices. Only one in twenty said they had plenty, while one in three said there wasn't a single bloom or leaf on the premises.’

Levy confirmed that businesses often do a DIY with plants buying them from a local nursery, not knowing the best place to position them in the building and often over watering them. That is why Ambius like other interior landscapers offer a maintenance service so that all plants are positioned correctly in the first place and fed and watered regularly thereafter.

Keep up with Dr Craig Knight's latest on-going research project in which he is collaborating with Indoor Garden Design with even more promising results to date.

