

CREATE A BRAIN-BOOSTING INDOOR GARDEN

If you have no garden or outside space, or spend most of your daylight hours inside, you can still create your own healing garden indoors. A wealth of scientific research shows that having plants in interior spaces improves concentration levels, elevates mood, and lowers stress and blood pressure levels. In fact, one UK study conducted in 2014 found that enriching a previously spartan space with plants increased the workers' overall productivity by 15 per cent. Indoor plants can also cleanse the air of toxins and alter relative humidity, which improves your health and comfort – and when you feel better physically, your mental state naturally improves.



Match the plant to the space...

While it's clear that indoor plants help to reboot your brain, what is the best way to maximize their benefits? First, when choosing plants for your home or office, opt for types that will thrive in your particular space. If a room receives little natural light, pick a leafy shade-lover, such as the Chinese evergreen or fern arum. Succulents and cacti flourish in hot, sunny sites, such as south-facing windowsills, while most orchids, other flowering plants, and some patterned foliage plants enjoy a bright room but not direct sunlight.

...and the colour to the mood

Think about the function of the room in question, as both foliage and flower colours can affect the ambience. A 2013 study in Japan showed that while dark-green plants make a space feel more relaxed and calm, red plants aid intense concentration. Brighter greens and yellows can enhance energy levels.

Keep fascination in mind

By grouping plants of different shapes, shades, species, and sizes, you'll replicate the fascination aspects of natural landscapes so beneficial to wellbeing. Also use windows as that crucial "open space" referred to in prospect refuge theory. A 2005 study showed that positioning plants near windows helps to lower human stress levels even more by drawing our eyes to them and to the view beyond – the brain is relaxed by looking at distant landscapes.

Even when space is at a premium, there are easy ways to help reboot your brain with greenery. A spider plant by a window is visually fascinating, and the views through the window can lower stress.



Plants to fascinate

Populate your indoor garden with houseplants that provide fascination with their shape, texture, and colour.

- **Boston fern** (*Nephrolepis exaltata* 'Bostoniensis') forms a fountain of arching green fronds.
- **Fern arum** (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) bears fronds of mid-green glossy leaflets arranged in pairs.
- **Madagascar dragon tree** (*Dracaena marginata*) has sprays of sword-shaped, gently curving striped leaves.
- **Snake plant** (*Sansevieria trifasciata*) features long, leathery, architectural green leaves that are often attractively marbled.
- **Echeverias** (*Echeveria* spp.) form elegant, textural rosettes in a range of colours.

An interesting mix of green plants with intriguingly shaped and patterned leaves will help to take your mind "offline", creating a soothing indoor refuge to help you to restore, relax, and reboot.

