

Plants are great to keep us calm

Adding to the list of positive benefits about having plants around us, is that they keep us calm and more than that, they de-stress us. No wonder green is the colour of calm in colour therapy!

In fact plants show that they lower the physical symptoms of stress like blood pressure, pulse rates and even skin conductivity.

Two research programmes in the 1990s, one here and one in the States, found this to be true. Both researchers, Russell and Lohr respectively, used tests to increase adrenaline, one mental arithmetic and one a computer test. The results for both were similar: stress levels rose as the delegates took part in these timed activities and in both cases with plants present the physical signs returned to normal more quickly than without plants present.

Recent Studies into the Benefits of Plants

In 2008 two studies one in Norway and one in The Netherlands showed that plants helped to keep workers calm and take less time off.

Tina Bringslimark (Norway), expert in environmental psychology, analyzed 305 office workers in 3 offices, each of which had differing amounts of greenery.

"We investigated the amount of self-reported sick leave and compared it with the amount of plants they could see from their desk. The more plants they could see, then the less self-reported sick leave there was," said Ms Bringslimark.

The study by John Klein Hesselink for TNO, The Netherlands found that plants primarily have an uplifting effect on stressed and tired individuals. In these groups of people the differences in performance recorded in offices with and without plants, were even greater.

The study also confirmed the restorative effect of plants. Subgroups of physically exhausted students and students indicating high levels of work stress benefit from plants in the room where they perform their tasks.

Summed up by Prof Tove Fjeld

"The specialist field covering the influence of the environment on human psyches is called environmental psychology.

" Studies in this area have shown obvious links between well-being, psychological stability, stress levels, other important aspects of human life and environmental factors.

“All these studies indicate that nature (such as plants, lakes and woods) can offer an important contribution to the reduction of stress. An urban environment, however, causes psychological stress.”

Just One Plant Will Benefit Your Office

In terms of reducing stress levels we must mention [Margaret Burchett's study](#) published this year (2010) which showed that plants reduced stress by as much as 50%.

Her study showed that this was one of the negative mood states to be effected by just one plant either on or beside a desk.

Using psychological survey questionnaires, Burchett showed a mean average of reductions in negative mood states of between 40 – 60%. Specifically:

- Depression – 58%
- Overall stress – 50%
- Anxiety – 37%
- Fatigue – 38%
- Confusion – 30%
- Overall negativity – 65%
- Anger – 44%

In the control group with no plants, stress levels rose by 20%