

Cultivating *peace*

By STACEY MARCUS



Succulents require little maintenance, making them a low-stress addition to the home.

Beat the winter doldrums with healthy and harmonizing plants

“Earth laughs in flowers,” poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote.

Who can deny the positive power of posies and plants?

You may have to abandon your outdoor garden as the winter blows in, but you can still discover a bevy of benefits blooming indoors in flowers and plants.

Not only do flowers perfume the air with

lovely scents and please the eye with their beauty, some plants also provide a plethora of health perks. These include increasing oxygen in the air, reducing stress and anxiety, removing toxins and pollutants, and adding moisture.

“I think all flowers make you happier and promote peace,” says Rachel O’Neil, owner of The Flower Shoppe of Eric’s in Reading.

O’Neil suggests keeping things simple when

it comes to creating a serene atmosphere in your home.

“Simpler designs that are monochromatic or of all just one type of variety are elegant and calming,” she says. “Rather than a bunch of different colors or flowers to look at. I love an all-white arrangement with simple greenery or a vase full of tulips.”

O’Neil says that flowers have “a calming quality” that she sees in action every time a customer walks into her shop.

“Even if they are hurried and frenzied, they seem more relaxed and less rushed when they leave,” she says. “The delivery of flowers from a loved one has an amazing effect on people’s well-being. Making someone’s day brighter is why we do what we do.”

If you are looking for more Zen-like blossoms, O’Neil suggests a couple of flowering plants:

▶ **Lavender:** At the top of O’Neil’s mind is lavender, as she says the scent is very calming and known for its peaceful effect on people. You often find lavender at spas and wellness centers.

▶ **Eucalyptus:** Eucalyptus is known to promote mental clarity and calm inflammation. She suggests using this in the shower for an aromatherapy experience. The warm water will help the eucalyptus stems produce a stronger scent, helping with relaxation and nasal congestion.

O’Neil also recommends four plants that promote peace and wellness:

▶ **Spider plant:** Along with being super easy to grow, spider plants are great air purifiers, especially when it comes to removing formaldehyde and carbon monoxide, she says.

▶ **Ivy:** Ivy moves most pollutants. The plants like temperatures that are a bit cooler, so O’Neil cautions not to place them in a super-sunny window or next to a heater.

▶ **Peace lily:** Peace lilies clear the air of alcohols, acetone, benzene and other pollutants. They are easy to care for and are great for an office with not much light, as they love the shade.

▶ **Snake plant:** The snake plant, also known as mother-in-law’s tongue, is a great honorable mention, O’Neil says, as it clears the air and is also super trendy right now. It is also known to give off more oxygen than other indoor houseplants.

Kevin Richardson, co-owner of Paper Moon Gardens, a garden design and care business in Reading, says that plants are more than just decorations. They are essential elements of a healthy and



The scent of lavender is known for lessening anxiety and increasing relaxation.

fulfilling lifestyle.

“Caring for plants can significantly boost your well-being,” Richardson says. “The act of tending to them provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment, fostering a feeling of connection to something living.”

“Watching plants grow and thrive can bring joy and a sense of wonder, reducing stress and anxiety,” he says.

He notes that the physical act of watering, fertilizing and repotting can be a form of gentle exercise, promoting physical health. Additionally, being surrounded by greenery has been shown to improve air quality and reduce indoor pollutants, contributing to better respiratory health.

Like O’Neil, Richardson is a big fan of lavender. He says that the soothing fragrance can reduce anxiety and stress, promoting relaxation and inner peace. The delicate purple blooms add a touch of tranquility to any space.

Richardson also recommends the following four plants:

▶ **Jasmine:** The sweet, floral scent of jasmine is often used in aromatherapy to alleviate stress and anxiety. It can promote a sense of calm and relaxation, making it a popular choice for bedtime rituals.

▶ **Bromeliad:** Their vibrant colors and unique shapes bring joy and positivity

to any space, promoting a cheerful and peaceful atmosphere.

▶ **Succulents:** These plants are relatively easy to care for, requiring minimal attention. This can reduce stress and anxiety, as there’s no need to worry about constant maintenance.

▶ **Calathea:** These plants are known for their distinctive leaf movements, often referred to as “prayer plants.” As the day progresses, their leaves gracefully open and close, creating a mesmerizing and soothing visual spectacle. This rhythmic movement can have a calming effect on the mind and body.

Joe Musgraves, general manager at Calareso’s Farm Stand and Garden Center in Reading, agrees that indoor plants like snake plants and spider plants are great ways to add a little greenery to your home in the winter and help purify the air.

He also observes that people who are gardeners seem to be enjoying life, as they have a sense of purpose and a hobby. He says that tending to plants is much like raising children, watching them change and grow throughout the years.

Well into fall, Musgraves was enjoying the bounty of hydrangeas that grew this year. After watching the many varieties grow, he cut them and brought them indoors. ▲