

5 Easy Care Houseplants

The 5 houseplants listed were featured on a recent Durham Daytime TV episode with Durham Master Gardener Ingrid Janssen and DDTV host Denise Marek.

Why have houseplants?

It's the middle of winter, the sky is dull most days and our gardens are frozen. What can we do to brighten our moods? How can we add some colour to our homes without having to repaint or redecorate? The answer is houseplants. They enhance our mood by reducing stress and calming us. They can inexpensively brighten up our décor and beautify our rooms, adding wonderful splashes of colour. Finally, plants are nature's air purifiers by removing toxins from our indoor space.

Key Characteristics

To select the 5 plants for this list we identified the following criteria:

- Easy care – the plants had to require little care and be fairly resilient to neglect
- NASA Clean Air Study – we wanted to include plants from the NASA Clean Air Study for removing toxins from indoor air
- Tolerance for low light – here in Durham Region we have very little sunlight in our homes in the wintertime and we wanted plants that would tolerate and even thrive in these conditions

5 Popular Houseplants – shown on Durham Daytime TV February 7, 2017

1. **Dracaena or Madagascar Dragon Tree**

Dracaena marginata 'Tricolor' is native to Madagascar, Mauritius and the islands of the Indian Ocean. It will grow to 1.5 to 2.5 meters; as new leaves emerge on top, the old ones fall off. It tolerates low light and requires minimal water in winter. The Dragon Tree is generally pest and disease free, but can get spider mites or scale insects if stressed.

2. **Spider Plant**

Chlorophytum comosum is native to tropical and southern Africa. Spider plants thrive in a wide range of conditions. Flowers and new plantlets develop at the end of inflorescences making it easy to propagate more plants. This plant will tolerate cooler temps but does require regular watering. This is one of the plants from the NASA Clean Air Study.

3. **Snake Plant**

Sansevieria trifasciata is a clump-forming plant with stiff, upright deep green leaves with lighter green snakeskin-like bands. The Snake plant comes from tropical South Africa. These plants actually like to be left in their pots until they become quite pot-bound before being re-potted. This is the perfect plant for those who forget to water regularly! It only requires watering once every couple of months in winter. It is also very tolerant of low light conditions.

4. **Golden Pothos**

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Epipremnum aureum 'Marble Queen' is a native of French Polynesia. This is another plant that requires little care other than regular watering. The beautiful glossy green, heart-shaped leaves have yellow marbling that make this a very attractive houseplant either in a hanging basket or trained on a trellis. Golden Pothos is very efficient at removing pollutants from the air. **A note of caution:** this plant is toxic to dogs and cats.

5. Common or English Ivy

Hedera helix is native to most of Europe and parts of Western Asia. This plant is widely planted as a garden plant to cover walls and trellises or as a groundcover. In many parts of North America this plant is considered invasive so it is best grown indoors as a houseplant. The lovely arching stems make this a perfect plant for hanging baskets but it also works well in a topiary. It prefers bright to medium light and prefers to be kept slightly on the dry side.