



We'll Maintain Your Plants... You Maintain Your Image!

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The Psychological Effects of Plants on People in Offices

Study 1: The Effect of Interior Planting on Stress by Helen Russell

The first study attempted to test whether the presence of plants in a room affected the stress levels of people undertaking a complex test. Participants in the study were invited to an office that had no plants or was heavily planted. Sensors were attached to the skin of the participants to record skin conductivity, heart rate, and blood pressure. The participant was allowed to get used to the surroundings for 10 minutes, during which time a base line recording of his stress levels was recorded. After this 10 minute period, the participant was asked to add up a list of 78 numbers without using his fingers or counting aloud. During the time they were allowed for the test, additional distractors, such as the sound of a ringing telephone or traffic noise, were played to them at random intervals. After the test, a further 10-minute period of rest was allowed.

This study was an attempt to find objective measurements of what was already widely perceived, namely that plants in offices can reduce stress. Of the three types of measurements made, skin conductivity showed the greatest difference between the group exposed to plants and the group in the unplanted office. The results showed that, for this measurement, stress was reduced in the planted office. The other tests showed very little difference between the two situations. The results also showed that those people in the planted office recovered from their stress more quickly than those in the unplanted office during the 10-minute post-test rest period.

The reasons for the difference between the groups were also discussed. It is thought that the presence of plants made the office more interesting. A comparison with other decorative objects in an office would have to be made to see whether there was something inherently special in plants that has an effect on perception. The effect of plants on stress may well be small and not apparent in those situations where the task performed is especially complex. In these situations, a person will be concentrating so much on the task in hand, that the surroundings make little impact. However, in situations where the task being performed is less complex or boring, the soothing effects of plants may be more noticeable and have a greater effect on the people doing the task. This could be the subject of further study and may have implications on workplace productivity.



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Study 2: Workplace Stress Study by Integra Realty Resources, Inc.

"Productivity in America is soaring -- but at the price of a growing desk rage," says Sean Hutchinson, president of Integra Realty Resources in New York. "As employee shortages continue to boost individual workloads in many sectors, employers need to take steps to alleviate America's growing workplace stress." Indeed, one out of every 10 workers (11%) say workplace stress is a major problem for them -- making them prime candidates for outbursts of desk rage. And two-thirds of American workers (65%) say workplace stress is a problem for them at least occasionally.

Study 3: The Effect of Interior Planting on Stress and Productivity by Dr. Virginia Lohr

In Dr. Lohr's study participants were 12 percent more productive and less stressed than those who worked in an environment with no plants. The study took place in a simulated office setting. Emotional states and pulses were also measured during the experiment. In addition to demonstrating significant increases in their post-task attentiveness, subject reaction time in the presence of plants was 12 percent faster than those in the absence of plants.