



## Memorandum

### Reasons to Eliminate Live Plants from the Indoor Work Environment

#### Live Plants & Indoor Air Quality

Some plants can cause skin or respiratory allergies for certain occupants. Unhealthy or diseased plants often introduce insects into the work environment. Mice may also be attracted to the soil. In addition, mold is often found on plants and in the soils. Potting mix may contain compost such as animal manure and composted leaves and grass clippings as well as plant food and may also become infested with fungus gnats. Over watering plants can also exacerbate mold growth. Water may be spilled on carpets, sheetrock, or wood surfaces damaging materials and potentially causing microbial growth. Use of some plant foods or fertilizers can also cause indoor air quality problems.

#### Passage from EPA Website: *Can Plants Control Indoor Air Pollution?*

*Recent reports in the media and promotions by the decorative houseplant industry characterize plants as "nature's clean air machine", claiming that National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) research shows plants remove indoor air pollutants. While it is true that plants remove carbon dioxide from the air, and the ability of plants to remove certain other pollutants from water is the basis for some pollution control methods, the ability of plants to control indoor air pollution is less well established. Most research to date used small chambers without any air exchange which makes extrapolation to real world environments extremely uncertain. The only available study of the use of plants to control indoor air pollutants in an actual building could not determine any benefit from the use of plants<sup>69</sup>. As a practical means of pollution control, the plant removal mechanisms appear to be inconsequential compared to common ventilation and air exchange rates. In other words, the ability of plants to actually improve indoor air quality is limited in comparison with provision of adequate ventilation.*

*While decorative foliage plants may be aesthetically pleasing, it should be noted that over damp planter soil conditions may actually promote growth of unhealthy microorganisms*