



BRINGING THE OUTDOORS IN: THE BENEFITS OF INDOOR GARDENING



February 2025

WHAT IS INDOOR GARDENING



At present, 55% of the world population lives in cities, and the urban population worldwide is expected to increase by 68% by 2050. Individuals in contemporary society evidently spend most of their time indoors, with urban dwellers spending more than 80% of their life indoors. Without ready access to nature, people living in urban areas have few opportunities to maintain contact with nature. Indoor gardening is the act of growing plants inside that you would typically grow outside. This gives individuals an opportunity to nurture a variety of plants, for example herbs, flowers, and vegetables, within homes, offices, and other indoor environments. As urbanization increases, this practice continues to gain popularity as it provides a way for people to stay connected to nature despite limited access to green spaces. A meta-analysis done by the International journal of environmental research and public health found that indoor gardening offers a range of benefits that extend beyond aesthetics. Studies found indoor gardening positively influenced physical health, mental well-being, and cognitive performance.



THE BENEFITS OF INDOOR GARDENING



Psychologically, indoor plants help reduce stress, anxiety, and negative emotions while promoting relaxation and overall happiness. Individuals exposed to indoor plants exhibit lower cortisol levels, which are associated with stress. Additionally, plants can enhance cognitive function by improving concentration, memory retention, and task performance. People who engage in indoor gardening or simply spend time around plants demonstrate higher academic achievement, greater productivity, and increased problem-solving abilities. In terms of health-related benefits, the presence of indoor plants has been linked to reduced sick leave, fewer hospital visits, and decreased use of pain medication. Indoor plants improve air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and pollutants while increasing oxygen levels through photosynthesis. Their ability to regulate humidity and reduce airborne toxins contributes to a healthier indoor environment, potentially lowering the risk of respiratory issues. Furthermore, indoor gardening fosters social interaction, particularly in communal settings, improving social well-being and life satisfaction. Given that urban dwellers spend most of their time indoors, incorporating plants into living and workspaces provides an accessible way to experience the therapeutic effects of nature.

TECHNIQUE: VERTICAL GARDENING



Vertical gardening is a space-saving technique where plants grow upward instead of spreading out horizontally. By growing plants vertically, you can increase the amount of plants grown in a space. It's perfect for dorm rooms, small apartments, shared living spaces, and overall if you have limited space. There are many ways to create your vertical garden on a budget. The possibilities are endless; Here are just a few ideas!

- **Stacked Shelves**-Use vertical shelves to maximize growing space.
- **Hanging planters**-Use wall-mounted planters, or hanging baskets.
- **Grid Systems**-Attach a trellis or wire grid to the wall.
- **Vertical Garden Kits**- There are many vertical tower gardens, wall planters, or felt planters that are available specifically to create vertical gardens.
- **Reuse what you have**- Many items that you have at home can be used to create a vertical garden. For example, using a shoe organizer or old fencing can be used to create a space for vertical gardening. A thrift store is also a great place to look for materials.

TIPS FOR A THRIVING VERTICLE GARDEN



- **Use sturdy supports** – Make sure the plants are strongly secured, preventing movement.
- **Choose the right location**- Ensure enough sunlight by placing these gardens by windows or supplementing with grow lights if needed.
- **Pick plants based on climate**- Make sure you select the right plants. Some plants prefer humid environments, while others thrive in dry air. Your plants will thrive when placed in the proper environment.
- **Use lightweight soil** – Use a well-draining potting mix to prevent root rot and to keep the garden light.



TECHNIQUE: SQUARE FOOT GARDENING



Square foot gardening is a method that organizes plants into small, defined sections for maximum yield in a limited space. It's commonly used for outdoor gardens but can also be adapted for indoor gardening in containers or raised planters to maximize plant space inside! There are many ways to create your indoor square garden, here are a few ideas!

- Use Containers – Choose a large, shallow container and divide it into equal square sections using string or wooden dividers.
- Plant According to Space Needs – Grow smaller plants like herbs and leafy greens in one-square-foot sections, while larger plants such as tomatoes may need more sections.
- Use Grow Lights – If natural sunlight is limited, use LED grow lights to provide adequate light for plant growth.
- Companion Planting – Combine plants that grow well together, such as basil with tomatoes or lettuce with radishes. A quick google search can help you accomplish this.

TIPS FOR A THRIVING SQUARE FOOT GARDEN



The best part about creating your garden is you can plant whatever you want in it. However, in an indoor setting, certain plants will do better than others. Always do some research on your plants and their needs before putting them into your indoor garden. Here are a couple of plants that do pretty well in vertical and square gardens.

- Edible plants such as fruit, vegetables, and herbs
- Ornamental & Air-Purifying Plants
- Flowering Plants and succulents
- Vining & Climbing Plants



Plant Spacing for a Typical 4' x 4' Square Foot Garden

Extra-large: 1 per square • Large: 4 per square • Medium: 9 per square • Small: 16 per square
Use the North facing side of your bed to plant vertical crops. This chart represents plant spacing only, look for many seasonal planting details, tips, and applications in the SFG books or visit us at: www.squarefootgardening.org



BONUS TIPS FOR STUDENTS



- Choose low-maintenance plants like succulents, herbs, or microgreens.
- Reuse materials like mason jars, yogurt cups, or plastic containers for planters.
- Water efficiently—avoid overwatering by using self-watering pots or watering trays.
- Use recycled or DIY planters to save money and be eco-friendly.

With the right plants and setup, indoor gardening can be an easy and rewarding way to grow food, purify air, and beautify spaces! By incorporating vertical or square-foot gardening, students can grow fresh, healthy plants indoors, even in small spaces!



**TO GET PLANTS FOR YOUR INDOOR GARDEN,
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Sources

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