

in the garden by Stephen and Kristin Pategas



STEPHEN & KRISTIN PATEGAS

## The Garden Indoors – Selection

Soften an interior, fill corners, create focal points, and bring the garden indoors. Interior foliage can complete an interior design and - take a deep breath- improve the air quality at the same time.

Due to the lower light levels inside, it's rare to have long-term plants that flower, so leave most of the blossoms to fresh cut flowers. Instead thoroughly explore all of the foliage options and focus on color, texture and pattern in the leaves. To determine which plants will thrive in your interior spaces, first conduct an interior survey. Note light levels and how they change through the seasons. Unless shaded by an overhang, structure, or tree, south facing windows will be very sunny during the winter and much less so during early summer when the sun rises and



*Sansevieria parva* (pencil snake plant)

sets farther north. By late June no sun will strike the southern façade. Second, look for vents that may blow hot or cold dry air onto those typically humidity-loving plants.

People spend an average of 90% of their time indoors and since air quality indoors is generally worse than outdoors, air-cleansing interior plants are vital. Plants improve indoor air quality by helping to remove chemicals such as formaldehyde, benzene, trichloroethylene, and carbon monoxide. They also convert carbon dioxide to oxygen.

In Bill Bryson's recent book "At Home," he states that natural gas became popular as an in-

door light source in the mid-1800's. It left a greasy layer of soot and blackened ceilings. The only indoor plant to survive was the cast iron plant (*Aspidistra*). As a bonus it also grows in deep shade.

Since indoor conditions generally do not provide enough light to promote full continuous growth, purchase plants at or close to the size you need to decorate the space. A too-small plant may never make it to the desired size.

Protect floors from water damage by using saucers (place felt on the bottoms if there are wood floors) or place the nursery pot in a solid-bottom decorative pot. When using baskets, place saucers under the plant inside the basket. Never trust the plastic sheeting liners. Always check saucers after watering since sometimes they fill up slowly. If plants are really dry the



*Dizygotheca elegantissima* (false aralia)

soil may pull away from the wall of the pot. Water very slowly so the root ball can re-hydrate. Otherwise the water will quickly flow down the gap on the side of the root ball and overflow the saucer.

Select the proper plants and enjoy a visual foliage feast of texture, pattern, and color and breathe easy.



*Aglaonema 'Golden Passion'* and a dwarf *Sansevieria* at the rear

### Interior Foliage Plants (\* air cleansing plant)

- Aglaonema (Chinese evergreen)\*
- Anthurium
- Aspidistra elatior (Cast iron plant)
- Bromeliad
- Chamaedorea (Bamboo palm)\*
- Chlorophytum (Spider plant)\*
- Cryptanthus
- Dizygotheca elegantissima (False aralia)
- Dracaena\*
- Epipremnum (Golden pothos)\*
- Ficus (Weeping fig)\*
- Philodendron\*
- Sansevieria (Snake plant)\*
- Spathiphyllum (Peace lily)\*
- Zamioculcas zamiifolia (ZZ plant) ■

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All photography by Stephen G. Pategas/Hortus Oasis