

Must-Have HOUSEPLANTS

for YOUR GARDEN CENTER

Get merchandising tips on some of the hottest indoor foliage plants sure to delight customers.

By Justin Hancock

Houseplants have steadily grown more popular over the last couple of years, particularly with millennials. It's no surprise why — houseplants are inexpensive, readily available and easy to acquire. They're beautiful home décor items, but rather than just sitting around going out of style like that passé plaid throw pillow, plants improve our health.

A multitude of scientific studies have shown how they purify the air and make us feel better physically and psychologically. And stories about plants are everywhere, from The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal to Forbes and The Economist. (One of my favorite pieces was titled "Think You Don't Need Houseplants? Science Says Different.")

It's easy to jump on the houseplant train, but to really excite and engage the new generation of plant parents, you'll need the right plants. Here are some recommendations.

Sansevieria

Sansevieria may be about as close as a plant can come to perfect. It's incredibly easy to grow and has been loved for generations for its ability to thrive in practically any indoor environment. That makes it a perfect starter plant for shoppers who are looking to get into plants, but are afraid they won't be successful.

Good old *Sansevieria trifasciata* provides a clean, classic look that fits well with the kind of minimalist décor that's so trendy. There are enough different varieties to keep consumers collecting, though. Tidy types like 'Fernwood' almost look grassy in comparison to their cousins. Variegated varieties like 'Black Gold' sport contrasting edges. And selections like 'Moonshine' feature a clean silvery look.

Merchandising Tip: When showing off your sansevieria, create a display the same way your consumers would at home. Show off sansevieria

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plants of different sizes. For example, a couple of 4-inch, a couple of 6-inch and a 10-inch offer an irresistible look.

Let your shoppers know about your offering by jumping on the #SansevieriaSunday hashtag on Instagram.

Colorful Aglaonema

Almost as easy to grow as sansevieria, colorful aglaonema varieties (like 'Siam Aurora', 'White Calcite' and 'Pink Dalmatian') are as visually interesting as they are sound.

They tolerate low light, don't mind medium spots and thrive in bright locales. Irregular watering is fine, too (as long as it's not too much).

This makes colorful aglaonemas no brainers for creating a lush, tropical look with their varying shades of green, plus red, pink, coral, yellow, chartreuse, cream and white.

Merchandising Tip: Because they're relatively low, mounding plants, colorful aglaonema are ideal for growing with taller tree-type houseplants. Plant them beneath those like *Dracaena marginata*, *Ficus benjamina* and *Ficus lyrata*.

Monstera

Monstera deliciosa practically defines the tropical look with its big fenestrated leaves. Happily, it's relatively easy to grow for consumers who have medium to bright light and lots of room for it to grow. A few healthy monstera's are sure to stand out in your store.

This houseplant has become so trendy that it's been covered by millennial-friendly lifestyle outlets like Popsugar, Racked and Well+Good. Other consumers see monstera featured in traditional lifestyle publications like Real Simple, Apartment Therapy and Architectural Digest. Like sansevieria, it also has its own popular Instagram hashtag: #MonsteraMonday.

Merchandising Tip: Sell your shoppers on monstera's future potential by showing pictures of large, established plants. Create attachment sales by offering moss totems and other structures on which consumers can let their monstera's climb.

Rubber Tree

Rubber tree (*Ficus elastica*) was a staple of the 1970s, and it's back now, as fine as ever. A cousin of fiddle leaf ficus (*Ficus lyrata*), which is also fantastically popular, rubber tree is easier to grow. It gives shoppers a better houseplant experience.

A few varieties are available, including 'Burgundy', which features deep purple-green foliage and 'Ruby', which is variegated with pink and cream. Like most houseplants, rubber tree thrives in bright light (the more indirect light, the better), and it tolerates medium-lit spots as well.

Merchandising Tip: Make 'Burgundy' and 'Ruby' rubber trees pop by placing them around plants with lighter-green foliage. It will help accent



Aglaonema 'Siam Aurora'



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Fittonia 'Juanita'



Fittonia 'Frankie'

the deep, rich tones of these trees' leaves and make them feel all the more special.

Fittonia

Not all consumers have space for a big, bold plant like monstera, fiddle leaf fig or rubber tree. Smaller houseplants like fittonia fit practically anywhere — from a tabletop to a window sill to a desk.

It's a good candidate for low-light spots in the home or office too. And many varieties (including 'Frankie' and 'Mini Pink') of fittonia capitalize on a houseplant sub-trend: pink plants. Pink-variegated fittonias (as well

as colorful aglaonema, stromanthe 'Triostar' and other houseplants with a similar hue) are hotter than ever.

Merchandising Tip: Fittonia is a thirsty plant that wilts quickly — and dramatically — when dry. Let your consumers know not to be alarmed if they see their plants lay down. It'll perk back up just as quickly with some water. A before-and-after video is perfect for demonstrating this! 🌿

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