

Read a houseplant air-cleaning claim carefully

A blank claim-reading table for separating what a test setup showed from what is known about an occupied home, with a hypothetical contrast and a short source check.

Record exactly what a houseplant air-cleaning claim says, where it was tested, and what remains unknown for your own home.

How to use this sheet

1. Pick one claim you have seen, such as a sentence on a label, a post or an article. Quote it accurately in the first column, or clearly label your own paraphrase.
2. Find the original source behind the claim if one is named. If only a general reference is given, such as an organisation's name with no named publication, write 'cannot check' in the evidence setting column.
3. Fill the next columns from what the source itself says, not from a summary. Write 'not stated' where it does not say.
4. In the 'transfers to this home' column, write only what the source itself supports about homes like yours. If it says nothing about occupied homes, write 'nothing stated'.
5. Use the last column to keep an honest list of unknowns. A long unknowns column is a useful result, not a failure.
6. Keep this as a reading record. It is not a plant-buying list and does not replace advice from a qualified clinician.

Use only the fields relevant to your notes. All fields are optional. Keep the sheet with your own records; no information is submitted.

The scope limit in one paragraph

The US EPA does not find evidence that a reasonable number of ordinary houseplants removes significant amounts of pollutants in homes or offices. That statement is about homes and offices. It does not mean every experiment is worthless, and it does not say plants remove nothing under any conditions. It means a result from one setting should be read as a result about that setting. An organisation's name on its own is not enough to identify a study. Look for the actual publication and the conditions it tested.

Claim-reading table

One row per claim. Leave cells blank or write 'not stated' rather than filling gaps with assumptions.

Claim being checked (quote, or clearly labelled paraphrase)	Evidence setting	What was measured	Ventilation and comparison conditions	What transfers to this home	What is unknown
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Hypothetical example (invented; not a real study)

Imagine a statement that a plant 'cleaned the air'. Reading the source, the reader finds that the plant sat in a small, closed container with no air moving in or out, and that a single substance was measured in that container over time. That fills three columns: setting, what was measured, and conditions. A living room is different: doors open and close, air moves in and out, people and activities come and go, and many things may be in the air at once. Whether the container's result describes the room is exactly what the source would need to show. If the source says nothing about rooms, the 'transfers to this home' cell reads 'nothing stated', and the unknowns cell records the differences between the container and the room. The example illustrates how to read, not any outcome.

Quick source check

- ☐ The original source is named, and I can read it myself rather than a summary of it.
- ☐ The source says where the test took place and what exactly was measured.
- ☐ The source says how air moved in the setting and what the plants were compared with.
- ☐ The source says whether anyone lived or worked in the space, or only describes a test setup.
- ☐ Any claim of 'removes' or 'cleans' matches what was measured, not just a general statement.
- ☐ I have written down what stays unknown, rather than filling the gap with a hopeful guess.

If you keep plants anyway

Enjoying plants is a separate question from air-cleaning claims. EPA notes that overly damp potting soil can encourage microorganism growth. Use this field to note a practical point for your own care routine, without relying on any air-cleaning claim.

Plant care instructions kept where

The label, the seller's care sheet or another source you can reread. Write 'not found' if so.

Watering note

What the care instructions say about how wet the soil should be. Do not add numbers from elsewhere.

Open question

Anything to ask the seller or a qualified person about the plant or its care.

Questions about using this sheet

Does this card say houseplants remove nothing from the air?

No. It says that EPA does not find evidence that a reasonable number of ordinary houseplants removes significant amounts of pollutants in homes or offices, and that a result should be read as applying to the setting where it was obtained. A test can be real and still leave open what happens in an occupied home. The table helps you record what a claim does and does not cover.

Can I use this card to choose which plants to buy or how many to keep?

No. It is a reading record, not a recommendation: it ranks no species, sets no plant count and gives no medical advice. If you keep plants, follow the care instructions for each one, and note that overly damp potting soil can encourage microorganism growth. For questions about someone's health or triggers, ask a qualified clinician.

Related reading

[Reliable sources on indoor dust, mould and carpet care](#)

[An allergen-aware approach to cleaning your home](#)

Sources and scope

[Improving Indoor Air Quality](#)

A reading aid, not a literature review: it does not assess any particular study or product.

Names no species, ranks none and gives no plant count or purchase list.

Draws on US EPA guidance; it makes no claim that plants do or do not remove any specific substance under any specific conditions.

Not medical advice and not a promise of air cleaning or symptom relief.

Independent editorial resource. Contact the publisher: lukasz@alepo.co.