

NURSERY PAPERS

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PRODUCING 'PLANT LIFE BALANCE'

The nursery industry's consumer-facing campaign, *Plant Life Balance*, is encouraging Australians to bring more green life into their homes, workplaces and communities.

Backed by science, the initiative aims to educate the broader community about the significant health and wellbeing benefits of plants.

Now in its second year, Plant Life Balance continues to evolve and boost plant sales for Australia's diverse nursery industry and its 1,777 growers.

In this Nursery Paper, we examine the research and resources helping to bring the campaign to life including case studies that feature Australian production nurseries.



In 2019, Plant Life Balance is expanding beyond the home and into all aspects of our lives, such as Paradise Traders, which inspires retailers to recreate the look in-store.

SUMMARY

The new-look Plant Life Balance campaign was launched in October 2017.

The launch was supported by a suite of resources, including plant styling guides and a smartphone app, to provide Australians with a 'plant rating' for their home.

The campaign put a spotlight on the diverse range of plants grown in Australia. It included a range of plant looks for customers to recreate in the home and, more recently, in the workplace and community.

Plant Life Balance is a multi-faceted campaign designed to reach a range of target audiences such as millennials and those living in urban areas. This has been realised through the promotion of material via retail nurseries, widespread media coverage, key influencers, a smartphone app and events.



The campaign supports the prosperity of Australia's nursery industry. It educates the community about the suite of benefits associated with plants, which in turn increases the demand for Australian green life.

The initiative is funded by Hort Innovation using funds from the nursery industry levy and contributions from the Australian Government.

The Republic of Everyone leads the project, with strategic input from growers and industry decision makers.



THE RESEARCH

To support the efforts of Plant Life Balance, the University of Melbourne, RMIT University and the CAUL Hub conducted a literature review of 101 scientific articles based on the physical and mental benefits of plants.

The research found that plants have two key benefits for customers: increased air quality and enhanced wellbeing. These two principles informed the development of the Plant Life Balance smartphone app, designed to help customers 'rate their space'.

GROWER TIP: Familiarise yourself with the research and inform your customers to help them sell more of your plants.

Air Quality

The research team concluded that articles relating to air quality assessed a plant's ability to absorb airborne pollutants,

such as particulate matter, inorganic compounds such as carbon monoxide, and volatile compounds – VOCs.

Some of these air-borne toxins, otherwise known as VOCs, are commonly used in household paints, furniture finishes and cleaning products. The Plant Life Balance research found that one plant could improve air quality by 25 per cent, with five plants cleaning the air by 75 per cent.

Source: *The Science, Plant Life Balance*
<https://plantlifebalance.com.au/the-science/>.

Wellbeing

The team from RMIT also looked at the range of emotional benefits of green life including improved mood, concentration, productivity and social interaction. The team found that one plant would offer minimal improvement, but a complete green 'look' would make a substantial difference.

They also found that diversity matters, so it's important for customers to incorporate a range of species, sizes

and forms to increase their general wellbeing. In outdoor spaces, a good array of plants will also boost wellbeing significantly.

For the full scientific report, visit <https://plantlifebalance.com.au/the-science/>

GROWER TIP: Be an expert on the science for your specific production lines. You will become a valuable resource and, as a professional horticulturalist, can provide the right advice to your customers.

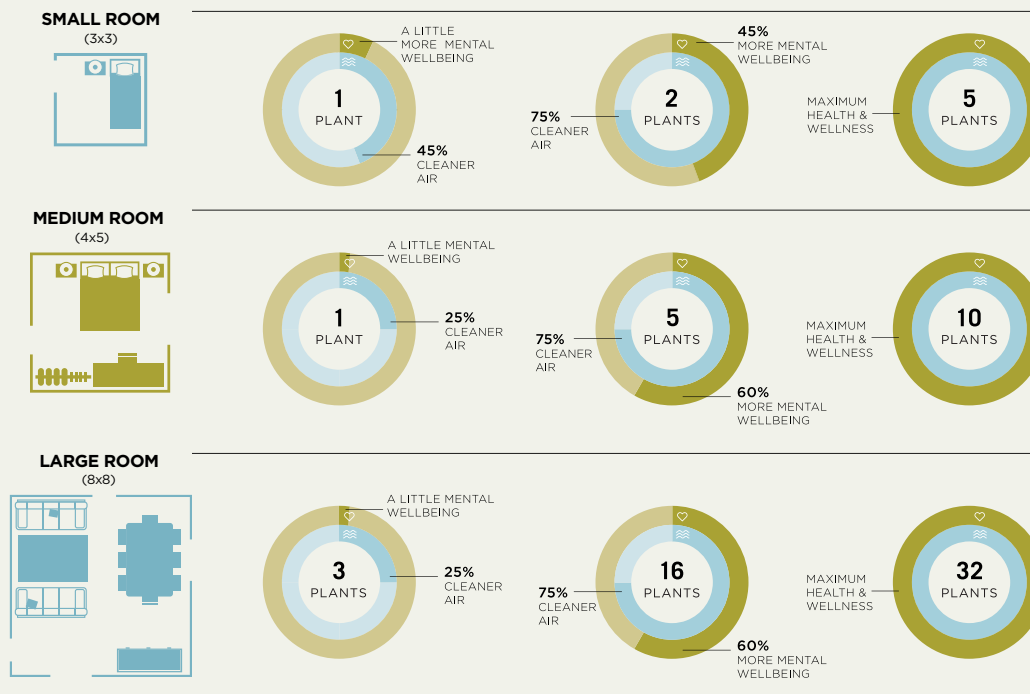
Application of Research

The research clarified that a range of plant species and sizes are needed to provide maximum health and wellbeing benefits. The size of a room plays a key role, for instance a small room requires five plants, a medium requires 10, and a large room requires up to 32.

It was this conclusion that led Plant Life Balance to develop the 15 'plant looks' promoted online and in retail nurseries.

THE RATING SYSTEM

The rating system makes it easy to understand the health and wellbeing benefits at a glance for different sized rooms. These are all based on medium sized plants (around 0.6m to 1.2m tall).



Size of a room and the type of species is important to improving health and wellbeing. Source: <https://plantlifebalance.com.au/the-science/>









SIZE MATTERS

Plants come in all shapes and sizes, and vary in their ability to absorb and eliminate pollutants.

We took this into account and developed a plant multiplier, to help work out how many small or large plants would be needed to do the same job as a medium plant.

We assumed that leaf surface area would affect a plant's ability to filter our pollutants and worked out the number of small, medium and large plants needed to fill 1m² of leaf area.

As shown in Figure 1, a small plant has a value of 0.3, a medium sized plant has a value of 1, a large plant has a value of 1.5.

COMMERCIAL SIZE	PLANTATION DENSITY RANGE	MULTIPLIER VALUE
 Small Plant	 Requiring more than six plants per m ²	0.3
 Medium Plant	 Requiring one to five plants per m ²	1
 Large Plant	 Requiring less than one plant per m ²	1.5

Species matters

The science above works on an averaging method. It's designed to be simple, to give you a well-estimated rules of thumb for improving your health and wellbeing.

When it gets to the details, some plants are better at improving air quality than others. NASA's Clean Air Study provides a good list of common indoor plants and the toxins they remove:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/NASA_Clean_Air_Study



The looks show consumers how to style their space using a wide variety of plant species and how these will help achieve greater health and wellbeing benefits.

THE RESOURCES

Plant Life Balance has produced a range of resources for Australian nurseries including a free digital kit that encourages businesses to promote the campaign in-store, via an e-newsletter or on social media.

Collateral such as banners, flyers and plant tags inspire customers with personalised looks, as well as educates about how many plants are needed to create real health and wellbeing benefits in the home.

While the promotion of this collateral is often through retailers, it is vital that production nurseries are familiar with the plant looks and the species list. The looks highlight a diverse range of indoor and outdoor plants, from ornamental to fresh herbs and trees.

GROWER TIP: Embrace the Plant Life Balance looks and demonstrate diversity of your plant lines. For example, group species listed by a certain look to promote your plant lists or catalogues. Remember, buyers are always looking for new inspiration!

THE APP

The research from Plant Life Balance has been brought to life with a free and easy to use smartphone app.

The award-winning app allows users to measure their 'plant life balance' based on the size of their rooms and number of plants.

It then calculates a rating and provides suggestions for users to incorporate more species into their homes or workplaces.

The app also educates users about the health and wellbeing of plants.

Download the Plant Life Balance app at the Apple App Store or get it on Google Play.

GROWER TIP: Download the app, it only takes a few minutes! If your customers mention the app, it will be quickly accessible for your reference.

GROWER PROFILE

DANNY SELZER DAN'S PLANTS, VIC.

GROWER HACK WHEN IT COMES TO PARTICULAR SPECIES IN DESERT DREAMS: *Water a cactus in the morning so that it has time to soak up the water. Watering a cactus in the middle of the day, especially in the warmer months, will see it soak up water too quickly, which may cause the stem to split.*

ANYTHING TO WATCH OUT FOR WHEN GROWING THESE PLANTS?:

Repotting might sound easy, but it can be a prickly task when it comes to a cactus. To repot, I recommend grabbing another plastic pot bigger than the original and placing the cactus into the new pot.

In your third pot, fill it with growing media and create a hole deep enough for the cactus to fit in. Then, simply turn the pot with the cactus upside down and into the new pot. Use sticks to adjust and cover with stones.

THOUGHTS ON DESERT DREAMS?:

It's an eye-catching theme and it certainly gives people an idea of what they can do with succulents, cactus and other hardy plants. It appeals to me – and I'd like to see more of it!



BECOME PLB ACCREDITED

Nurseries can also become "Plant Life Balance Accredited", which equips staff with the science and marketing knowledge, to confidently promote the campaign to customers. It only takes 10 minutes and your nursery is listed as PLB accredited: <https://plantlifebalance.com.au/the-nurseries/>



PLANTS IN THIS LOOK
A MIX OF PLANTS SUITABLE FOR A RANGE OF LIGHT LEVELS AND GROWING CONDITIONS ARE LISTED BELOW

JAPANESE MAPLE <i>Acer palmatum</i>	Aeonium <i>Aeonium arborescens</i>	CENTURY PLANT <i>Aloe striata</i>	ALOE VERA <i>Aloe vera</i>	KANGAROO PAW <i>Anigozanthos</i> spp. & cvs.
FEDERATION DAISY <i>Argyranthemum</i> spp. & cvs.	CUT-LEAF DAISY <i>Brachycome</i> spp. & cvs.	DWARF SHE-OAK <i>Casuarina glauca</i> 'Pristine Form'	YELLOW BUTTONS <i>Chrysanthemum</i> spp. & cvs.	LEMON <i>Citrus</i> spp.
PIG'S EAR <i>Cotyledon</i> spp. & cvs.	JADE OR MONEY TREE <i>Crassula</i> spp. & cvs.	BLUEBERRY <i>Vaccinium</i> spp. & cvs.	LEMONGRASS <i>Cymbopogon citratus</i>	NATIVE FLAX <i>Dianella</i> spp. & cvs.
HEN AND CHICKENS <i>Echeveria</i> spp. & cvs.	STRAWBERRY <i>Fragaria</i> spp. & cvs.	FLAPJACKS <i>Kalanchoe luciae</i>	PANDA PLANT <i>Kalanchoe tomentosa</i>	SILVER SPOONS <i>Kalanchoe hillebrandii</i>
LAVENDER <i>Lavandula</i> spp. & cvs.	SPEARMINT <i>Monarda spicata</i>	OREGANO <i>Origanum vulgare</i>	GERANIUM <i>Pelargonium</i> spp. & cvs.	ROSEMARY <i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i>
FAN FLOWER <i>Scaevola</i> spp. & cvs.	ZYGOCACTUS <i>Schubertiana</i> spp. & cvs.	MARI GOLD <i>Tagetes</i> spp. & cvs.		

PRODUCING THE PLANT LOOKS

Over the past two years, the team from Plant Life Balance has created 15 curated plant looks.

Themes range from 'Jungle Vibes', a look featuring lush, tropical plants suited to low lit areas, right through to 'Fantastic Feasts', a look that encourages Australians to enjoy home-grown fruit and vegetables in their backyard.

A team of horticulturalists, plant experts and landscapers have carefully curated each look for a different theme or purpose. For instance, 'Childs Play' is full of interesting, non-toxic plants that are great for children.

Accompanying each look is a recommended list of plants that are suitable for specific light levels and growing conditions. We recommend growers visit www.plantlifebalance.com.au to see which looks use their stock and to share any of their production tips with customers.

More recently, the Plant Life Balance campaign has moved from greening the home, to all areas of our lives including local shops, cafes and public places.

New looks such as 'Paradise Traders' use eye catching plants to entice customers into retail spaces, which further expands the reach of plants.

GROWER TIP: Familiarise yourself with the species from each look. Capitalise on the lines you are growing by highlighting this in your sales and marketing. You may also be growing suitable alternatives that could achieve a similar look.

Get to know the plant looks!

Discover where and how your plant species appear in the 15 curated plant looks. Don't forget to share them with your customers too!

Paradise Traders, Heaven Scent, Beachy Green, Hanging Botanica, Bloomin' Gorgeous, Dark Matters, So French So Chic, The Remedy, Desert Dreams, Sharehouse Heroes, Birds & Bees, Child's Play, Fantastic Feasts, Formal Luxe and Jungle Vibes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE NURSERY INDUSTRY

Plant Life Balance is by industry, for industry. It generates awareness of, and builds demand for, Australian green life. Using creative designs and useful resources, the campaign builds excitement about plants in the community and their positive impacts on our health and our happiness.

Keep an eye out for more Plant Life Balance news and resources in 2019. Visit www.plantlifebalance.com.au for more information.

GROWER PROFILE

CAROLE FUDGE

BENARA NURSERIES, WA.

GROWER HACK WHEN IT COMES TO PARTICULAR SPECIES IN BIRDS & BEES:

*One of my favourite low growing, spreading plants has to be the *Casuarina glauca* 'Cousin It' – I like the way it rolls across the landscape and trails down embankments.*

ANYTHING TO WATCH OUT FOR WHEN GROWING THESE PLANTS?:

*The *Casuarina* forms a crown of foliage that requires plenty of water to keep the root ball moist.*

GENERAL THOUGHTS ON THE BIRDS AND BEES LOOK:

The look embraces a modern garden that is full of native plants. It also blends in with the surrounding landscape. Best of all, it attracts native birds – and who doesn't love birds in the garden?

ANY OTHER TECHNICAL ADVICE TO CUSTOMERS?:

Just because a plant may be native with low water requirements, it still needs thorough watering. I recommend hand watering new plantings for the first few weeks, rather than relying on automatic reticulation. Soil preparation is also important.



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