

GARDENING INDOORS

Although the summer weather is tempting us out into our gardens, the truth is many of us spend our days behind a desk. But that doesn't mean we can't enjoy a bit of nature in our work spaces.

Ambius, www.ambius.com, a leading provider of plants for the workplace, reports that the trend in workplace greenery for summer 2010 favors lush, colorful and tropical foliage.

Based on client requests to Ambius, here are the top five indoor plants this year:



■ **Pygmy date palm tree:** The tree (*Phoenix roebelenii*) is native to Southern China, and is also known as the Robellini palm and miniature date palm. It can grow up to 10 feet tall. It has a slender trunk and bright green pinnate leaves that grow from the top of the trunk with arching stems.



■ **California ivy or English ivy:** *Hedera helix* 'California'

can be trained to climb up walls or live inside a hanging basket. It features a solid, deep green ivy leaf of medium size.



■ **Orchidaceae:** The orchid family includes a multitude of species estimated to be four times the number of mammal species. The plants feature showy, beautiful flowers that make an elegant statement in a workplace environment.

■ **Kalanchoe:** This plant class has more than 125 species of tropical, succulent flowering plants that add color and panache to office cubicles. The plant has flowers that form small clusters. Kalanchoe comes in many shades of red, orange, yellow and purple.



■ **Aspidistra Elatior:** This native of Asia is commonly known as the cast-iron plant or iron plant, and sports large, leathery leaves.

WATER-WISE TIP

Even with recent rains there is a continued need to conserve water. Contra Costa Water District provides weekly tips on doing so.

Setting the irrigation timer can be a difficult chore, but help is on the way.

If you live in the Contra Costa Water District, you can receive a free home water use evaluation by calling 925-688-8320. An expert from the district will inspect each sprinkler station, develop a custom watering schedule for your landscape, and help you program the schedule into the controller.

For more information on this and other conservation programs, go to www.ccwater.com/conserve. For those living outside the district, contact your water provider for assistance.

IN THE GARDEN

Experts with the California Association of Nurseries and Garden Centers say:

■ Check brown spots in lawns for sodweb worms and grubs.

■ If your spring blooming bulbs have gone dry and yellow, cut off the foliage, then divide and replant any crowded clumps of bulbs for better bloom next year.

■ To ensure the brightest colored bracts on your bougainvilleas vines, keep them on the dry side during their blooming season.

■ Plant garden mums now for a blaze of color this fall.

■ Feed tuberous begonias and fuchsias with 0-10-10 fertilizer.

■ Divide and transplant bearded iris.

— Joan Morris

