

Tips for Allergy-Free Gardening & Indoor Houseplants/Flowers

Individuals who have respiratory [allergies](#) may experience difficulty around flowers and other plants in indoor as well as outdoor garden environments. Fortunately, there are many flowers, shrubs, trees, and grasses that produce very little or no pollen and can be used in both indoor and/or outdoor environments.

Only male plant species produce the pollen that people react to, so that if you are able to purchase female plants you can be sure that they do not produce pollen. In addition, there are now genetically modified flowers that have been cultivated that are unable to produce pollen. These plants in general do not reproduce and are a great alternative for individuals who have symptoms around flowers.

Unfortunately, these kinds of plants are not generally commercially available yet. Therefore, you can try to reduce symptoms by avoiding the worst offenders. In general, the more colorful the flower, the more likely it will produce an abundance of pollen that is heavy and sticky which serves to attract insects. Most ornamental flowers and indoor flowers are of this type and fortunately, most of the pollen is not airborne.

Outdoor Gardens or Indoor Flowers



It is helpful in some cases of outdoor gardens or buying plants for inside your home to pick flowers that propagate using bulbs instead of pollen. Such examples include Daffodils and Tulips. Other garden plant alternatives that produce minimal pollen are Geranium, Hydrangea, Hosta (Plantain Lilies), and Lilies. Flowers that produce significant amount of pollen and should be avoided include Chamomile, Chrysanthemums, Daisies, Goldenrod, and Ordinary Sunflowers.

Another problem from having flowers or plants in the home is the dust that can occur on the leaves and molds that may develop in the soil. Added humidity from watering the plants may lead to excess relative humidity (> 50% relative humidity) that encourages mold and dust mite levels. In addition, since sensitive individuals may also develop a contact reaction or rash with direct exposure to plant material, so that handling plants with gloves and/or wearing a mask may also be a help.

Alternatively, indoor plants could be limited to non-flowering plants. Indoor plants can be kept relatively dust free with periodic rinsing of the plants with water. Avoid soaking the soil and allow good drainage so as not to encourage mold growth in the soil. Sometimes using aquarium gravel or fine sand over the soil can contain mold spores. Plants usually tend to have less mold if they are left in sunny well-ventilated areas. The bedroom is usually not a good choice for indoor plant material since most individuals spend the majority of their time home in their bedroom while sleeping.

The following flowers, trees, grasses are better suited for gardens and people with outdoor allergies.

- **Trees:** Apple, Cherry, Pine, Myrtle, Dogwood, English Holly, Magnolia, Pear, Plum, and Maple.
- **Grasses:** St. Augustine
- **Shrubs:** Azalea, Boxwood, Hibiscus, Hydrangea, and Viburnum.
- **Flowering plants:** Begonia, Cactus, Clematis, Crocus, Daffodil, Daisy, Geranium, Hosta, Impatiens, Iris, Irish Lily, Pansy, Periwinkle, Petunia, Phlox, Roses, Salvia, Snapdragon, Thrift, Tulip, Verbena, and Zinnia.

The following plants should **avoided**:

- **Flowers/Herbs:** Pigweed Chamomile, Chrysanthemums, Daisies, Goldenrod, Sunflowers
- **Grasses:** Bermuda, Fescue, Johnson, June Orchard, Perennial Rye, Redtop, Saltgrass, Sweet Vernal, and Timothy
- **Trees:** Cypress, Juniper Trees, Alder, Ash, Beech, Birch, Box Elder Cedar, Cottonwood, Elm, Hickory, Maple, Mulberry, Oak, Olive, Palm, Pecan, Pine, Populous, Sycamore, Walnut, Willow
- **Weeds:** Cocklebur, Poison Ivy, Oak, Sagebrush, Sumac Ivy, Ragweed, and Russian Thistle
- **Shrubs:** Cypress, Jasmine, Wisteria

Lawn care:

- Timothy grass and tall fescue are recommended. These grasses usually do not flower unless allowed to grow 12 inches or higher, therefore the recommended minimum height for lawns is about 2 inches