



Tell your boss to ‘plant it

HOT desks, GFCs, space conservation and fickle fashion almost buried office greenery. But the seeds have been sown for more workplace plants. And the movement is growing.

Australians were being urged to take plants back into the workplace to create harmony and promote better health and productivity.

A Newspoll survey of office workers nationwide showed that two thirds would prefer to work in an office that has plants but more than half don't have greenery in their own work area.

A Nursery and Garden Industry Australia (NGIA) representative responded to the survey by creating Plant Life Balance Day, planned for March 2 to highlight the significant benefits of plants in the workplace. Robert Prince, CEO of NGIA, said a more harmonious workplace could be just a Peace Lily away.

"More than half the workforce surveyed felt offices with plants had cleaner air and that they feel more positive at work with plants around them," Mr Prince said.

"One in three went so far as saying they had more energy at

work when plants were around and they're certain plants help them work more productively.

"That was an incredibly powerful message for all employers about the use of plants to improve their office environment, boost morale and increase productivity."

Professor Margaret Burchett and her colleagues from the Plant Environmental Quality Group at the University of Technology Sydney have measured how effective plants are at removing pollutants from the air and give foliage 'two green thumbs up'.

"Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) emitted from plastic or synthetic materials in office furniture, fittings, computers and printers could cause headaches, loss of concentration and eye, nose and throat problems, while carbon dioxide (CO2) had been linked to drowsiness," Professor Burchett said.

"Our research proved that office plants could reduce VOCs by 80 per cent and CO2 by up to 25 per cent, so the health benefits were significant."

Professor Burchett said a leafy office relieved stress and reduced negative mood states by up to 60 per cent and just one

plant was enough to make a positive difference in the workplace. Mr Prince said NGIA will list workplace plants and offer other relevant information on a new fan page at www.facebook.com/plantlifebalance.

"If you were new to tending indoor plants or were in a workplace with little natural light we could point you towards the most hardy and resilient varieties, like zanzibar gems and mother-in-law's tongue," he said. "If you were more accomplished in caring for desktop greenery we could highlight some of the new trendy plants like fiddle-leaf figs."

