An Excerpt from *Partnering with Nature*

**The Healing Power of Plants**

For thousands of years, humankind has benefited from the healing capacity of plants. Many medicinal remedies are made from plants and many pharmaceutical companies today still rely on plant extracts. Over one hundred pharmaceuticals are derived from plants, including Taxol, an anti-tumor drug from the Pacific yew tree; thymol, from thyme, which is used as an anti-fungal treatment; papaverine, a muscle relaxant from the poppy, *(yes, there is some truth to Dorothy of The Wizard of Oz falling asleep in the poppy field)*; and bromelain, which is a anti-inflammatory made from pineapple.

Now plants are even more important to health and healing than they were in the past, since our modern world—our own homes and places of work—has become increasingly toxic from common things, such as cleaning products, paint, carpets, tobacco smoke, and petroleum products. Because newer homes and office buildings are also constructed to be airtight to stop energy loss from heating and air conditioning systems, offending toxins and chemicals are simply recirculated. In addition, newer building materials often contain chemicals that are unhealthy. This has given rise to what is known as sick building syndrome (SBS), a term used by the Environmental Protection Agency to describe buildings that cause illnesses in people who spend time inside them. In fact, this was such a pervasive problem that as early as 1984, the World Health Organization Committee had issued a report suggesting that up to 30 percent of buildings worldwide were making people sick.

Thus, living and working in well-ventilated buildings, and making sure that your home and work environments do not contain toxic materials, is essential to ensuring health and well being. After you have taken whatever steps you can to detoxify your home (like removing toxic materials), you can then make changes to enhance the indoor environment.

Bringing plants into your home or office is an effective way to clean and purify the air. Plants are amazing natural air cleaners, taking in stuffy air filled with carbon dioxide and pollutants and turning it into healthy oxygen. Through a process of metabolic breakdown, the leaves of certain plants absorb harmful organic chemicals and destroy them. Spider plants excel at this feat. Even formaldehyde, a highly toxic substance, can be metabolized and converted into harmless substances by the humble little spider plant.

**Bringing the Healing Power of Plants into Your Home and Office**

The most important rooms or areas to start with when using plants are those places where you spend the majority of time. Your bedroom and your workspace are two places to start. In your bedroom, place a healthy plant on each side of your bed, preferably on bedside tables. Next, place plants near where you work. For example, put plants right next to your computer if you use the computer a lot. For all of the other rooms in the house, like the living room or kitchen, place two or three plants in the corners, depending upon the size of the room.

Some plants that are particularly well suited to purify indoor air are areca palm, red palm, Boston fern, Australian sword fern, rubber plant, weeping fig, bamboo palm, Chinese evergreen, English ivy, gerbera daisy, mass cane/corn plant, pot mum, peace lily, and spider plants.