

UAF Facilities Services Indoor Plant Program Origins

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Studies show that Americans spend ninety percent of their lives indoors (RedOrbit September 19, 2005), which means that good indoor air quality is vital for good health. As stated in the February 2005 SixWise Newsletter article, The Health Benefits of House Plants, Plants are the lungs of the earth: they produce the oxygen that makes life possible, add precious moisture, and filter toxins. Houseplants can perform these essential functions in your home or office with the same efficiency as a rainforest in our biosphere.

The UAF Indoor Plant Program was created by Facility Services as a result of numerous calls received over the last two years regarding the health and appearance of the indoor plants throughout the campus. The program began by inventorying all the plants located within public areas of each campus building. Public areas include entries, hallways, lobbies, classrooms, teaching labs, reception areas, lounges & study areas.

The inventory process discovered over 600 plants in public areas campus wide that were provided by department faculty, staff, and/or students. Collectively, the plants fell within a range of "very well cared for" to "extremely poor health". Many departments/areas have gorgeously well maintained plants however; there are many places on campus where the plants are in need of some level of attention.

The UAF Indoor Plant program is a campus wide partnership endeavor with a threefold mission to, 1) restore the health of plants in common areas (or dispose); 2) create an aesthetically pleasing environment, and 3) ensure the purpose of the area/room is functioning properly and without impediments or safety issues. The program is in its infancy and will evolve and become more efficient with time and feedback.

The program manager works with the building captains to partner with existing plant caretakers by assisting them in their plant care efforts and then to recruit others to cover the plants care in areas without a current caretaker.

The tasks of establishing the program and addressing all of the plants current needs will take much more time and budget than the preservation aspects. It is predicted that the preservation aspect of the program will take approximately 8 weeks each spring and 1 week a month throughout the rest of the year.

The program budget is very limited at this time. Staffing consists of only one casual employee with part time student assistance, as needed. Consequently, the level of support to the various caretakers will be evaluated on a case by case basis. To fully develop the Indoor Plant Program, additional funding sources are being researched.

Please contact us at 474-7000 with any comments, concerns and/or questions. We look forward to partnering in this endeavor and to see the positive affects it will create on our beautiful campus.

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