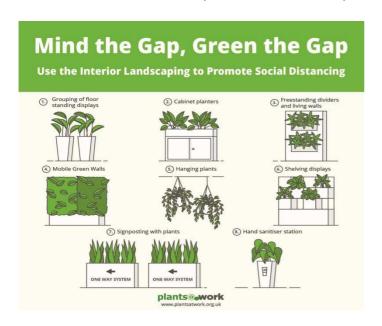**28 October 2020**

PRESS RELEASE

Mind the Gap, Green the Gap

COVID 19 has certainly thrown everything into chaos this year. Now as we are entering the much expected second spike it is even more important that we keep ourselves and one another safe.

Our industry is luckier than most having the tools to do this. Let us explain some of the ways our members have come up with to make workplaces safer for their occupants.

Mind the Gap, Green the Gap
Use the Interior Landscaping to Promote Social Distancing

1. Grouping of floor standing displays
2. Cabinet planters
3. Freestanding dividers and living walls
4. Mobile Green Walls
5. Hanging plants
6. Shelving displays
7. Signposting with plants — ONE WAY SYSTEM / ONE WAY SYSTEM
8. Hand sanitiser station

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As the three tier system has been introduced and people are told to work from home if they can, don't despair. Businesses wherever possible are encouraged to stay open especially if they can operate safely. So let's look at what we can do to keep everyone as safe as possible.

Mind that gap
One of the first instructions we had from government sources at the beginning the pandemic was to keep a 2 metre distance between ourselves and anybody else who wasn't immediate family. This hasn't changed but it seems to have been one of the first 'rules of the pandemic' to be ignored. We all saw pictures of people crowding those south coast beaches in the summer and revellers leaving public houses as the months have gone on but as we mentioned, the guidelines haven't changed and the ideally 2 metre (6ft 6 inches) distance between you and the next person should be adhered to.

Throughout the initial lockdown and as it came to an end and businesses started to reopen, walkways were signed inside retail outlets and workplaces to remind people of the safe space needed. But signage and tape on the floor is easy to ignore! Neither actually blocks the way.

Using planted troughs in a line or large planted pots in a line make a perfect barrier to divide a space into two lanes of traffic or a barrier around desks. This ensures people don't cross over into the other lane or get too close. There are many ways this can be introduced and we can show you a few here:

Mobile screens or moveable plant walls also do a fabulous job of creating divides with the added bonus of being able to move them to different areas as needed.

Building walls of plants via shelving units or strung plants are other ways of creating plant 'walls' to use to mark lines of demarcation. In fact plants offer numerous creative ways to mark out spaces and help to keep teams safe.

Of course mobile green walls (units on casters) and dividers of moss or plants can be used to create 'walls' between desks effectively.

Greening the gap certainly blocks the way so that people have to take a longer way round and ensures distancing is adhered too.

Green the gap
Another plus about adding plants between desks/people/walkways is the fact that plants have many positive qualities.

One: plants absorb particles in the air.
As we breathe in 0.5 litres of air 12- 20 times per minute i.e. at least 17,000 litres per day, the cleaner the air the better! Although there is no direct evidence that plants absorb particles containing the coronavirus, they are known to absorb many other obnoxious substances.

Two: plants raise humidity levels
Raising humidity levels helps. Urban Planters explain it perfectly:

"Plants increase humidity levels, due to transpiration: up to 99% of the water absorbed by a plant's roots is lost via transpiration through the plant's leaves. This in turn could be key in

helping to limit the transmission of airborne respiratory droplets floating around in the air after an infected person coughs or sneezes. Higher humidity prevents a viral droplet from evaporating and reducing in size, meaning that it settles out of the air rapidly. In contrast to this, in low humidity, viral droplets evaporate rapidly, decrease in size and remain airborne for prolonged periods, increasing the time and distance over which transmission can occur."

They go on to say, *"It's important to stress that this theory has not been tested on Covid-19, although it has been previously proven by Dr Alan Evangelista (a microbiology and virology professor at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children in Philadelphia) on other common coronaviruses and influenza particles. Dr Evangelista stresses that there are no guarantees that Covid-19 will behave exactly like these, but the laws of physics should apply in the same way."*

See: https://www.urbanplanters.co.uk/blog/creating-a-healthy-distance-with-plants/

Three: plants help to keep us less stressed
We've all heard how many of us have returned to gardening during the first lockdown phase and found it of value. So surrounding your workforce with plants can only be a good thing. Of course it also locks into the biophilia theory that finds we all have an innate need to connect with nature.

Preferably natural light and plants are the easiest ways to add biophilia to office spaces. With mental health problems rising as the pandemic goes on, including plants in your office environment can only be a good thing.

Four: a bonus plants help improve productivity
Research undertaken by Dr Craig Knight found that including plants in a workplace increased productivity by 17%. That can't be bad.

So the list goes on ... plants have a positive effect on us all even if we don't realise it.

Wash your hands

Washing hands was one of the first instructions for staying safe and remains a top priority. One company has cleverly designed a plant pot that incorporates a sanitiser dispenser. This is a great idea and allows workplaces to prompt employees or visitors to sanitise their hands as they enter a building or a workspace.

Image courtesy of Livingreen Design

Fresh air: good ventilation

Ventilation is an important factor for COVID 19 safety. Where possible, ventilation to let fresh air into working buildings – as long as it isn't more contaminated than the indoor air – helps to relief contamination.

Often air conditioning recycles old or part of the old air so won't necessarily e the best use of refreshing the air. Of course some modern buildings don't have windows that open too. In these situations plants can certainly help to refresh the air as we've mention earlier.

Where ventilation cannot be managed effectively, it is better to reduce the number of people occupying the space.

If you would like to implement any of these ideas in your workplace, please contact a [plants@work member.](#)

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