

Consumers' preferences for foliage plant attributes

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Researchers used eye-tracking technology and rating-based experiments to determine what affects consumers' likelihood of buying indoor plants. The study in the October issue of *HortScience* offers new insights into consumer purchasing preferences and includes valuable recommendations for plant producers and retailers.

The scientists explained that [eye-tracking technology](#) is a unique research method that can be successfully used by researchers in the horticulture industry. They said that, unlike other research methods, eye-tracking analysis shows real information about consumers' information acquisition behavior by providing researchers a way to determine which attributes are "visually attended" by participants and which attributes they tend to ignore.

The study also investigated consumers' interest in three specific plant attributes: plants' ability to remove VOCs, production methods, and place of origin. Results showed that alternative (i.e., organic) production methods positively influenced consumer purchasing behavior. Additionally, in-state origin, domestic origin, and high VOC removal all increased the likelihood of participants' purchasing indoor foliage plants.

A third element of the study was determining consumers' primary barriers to purchasing indoor foliage plants. "Knowing what hinders consumers' purchasing of plants benefits breeders, developers, growers, marketers, and retailers by giving them the opportunity to address potential barriers," the author said. Plant maintenance was the most

common purchasing barrier selected by participants. "Price, limited light, and limited space were all comparable purchasing barriers, suggesting a possible niche market for inexpensive, small, low-light-tolerant indoor foliage plants," they said.

Visual attention to the highest plant price was shown to increase participants' purchase likelihood. "There are several possible explanations for this result," said the researchers. "First, [consumers](#) use very few pieces of information before arriving at a purchase decision, often relying mainly on price. Second, the study's participants likely were undecided on their purchasing intention and used price as their deciding attribute."

The authors said that understanding and promoting plant attributes that are relevant to consumer needs and interests can be one way to mitigate decreasing demand for indoor foliage plants. "The results of our study have implications for indoor foliage plant growers and retailers as they produce, promote, and sell their products," said the authors.

More information: The complete study and abstract are available on the ASHS *HortScience* electronic journal web site:
[hortsci.ashspublications.org/c ... /50/10/1524.abstract](http://hortsci.ashspublications.org/c.../50/10/1524.abstract)

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