

## Spring is in the air... along with a bunch of other stuff - By Stanton Southwick

'Tiz the season to be sneezin'. The temperatures are warming up, the trees and shrubs are blooming, and the wind is blowing. Sure signs that my love/hate relationship with spring has begun. For many of us, this is allergy season and as beautiful as the earth becomes at this time of year, it is sometimes difficult to see through red, swollen, itchy, watery eyes. In honor of this yearly event, please enjoy this poem by Dustin Self...and try not to sneeze on the monitor.

### SPRING TIME FOR ME

Spring is in the air  
'cause I feel it in my head.  
I haven't slept in days now.  
Oh! How I miss my bed.

The flowers are all so gorgeous  
when they finally start to bloom.  
But for me and all my allergies  
It's a time for pain and gloom.

There's nothing like a springtime scene  
with colors for all to see.  
I take my shots and all my meds.  
Oh! Why'd this happen to me.

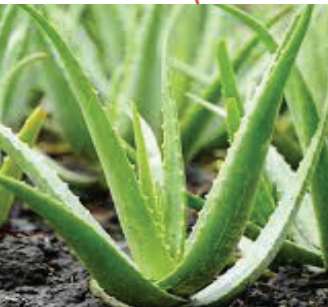
Spring is in the air now  
and I can't see or hear.  
But even after all my pain  
I love this time of year!



*"If you are allergic to a thing, it is best not to put that thing in your mouth, particularly if the thing is cats." ~Lemony Snicket (Daniel Handler)*

## Favorite Flora:

### Aloe Vera (*Aloe barbadensis*) - By Caryl Davies



Did you know there is a rating system called the Ogren Plant Allergy Scale (OPALS) that ranks plants from 1 (allergy friendly) to 10 (allergenic)? I ran across this ranking system when asked many years ago by a residential client to make her backyard allergy free. The conclusion I drew from my study into this topic is that we all can do our part to install plants that are low on the allergy scale and avoid high pollen plants (several are banned from being planted here in Las Vegas such as Fruitless Mulberry Trees and European Olive), but pollen can be carried by the wind many miles. You will be given the gift of pollen from someone else's yard or adjacent native area. In fact, it is estimated that 12% of the world's flowering plants are wind pollinated. They

are just doing what they need to propagate and survive. Can't blame them for doing that.

Keeping in mind that people (me, me, me) have plant allergies, this month's spotlight plant, Aloe Vera, has a low allergen rating (1) and can be grown outdoors in a protected area or indoors. When I was first out on my own and learning how to cook, I so often burned myself on the stove or oven that I kept a nice big aloe vera in the kitchen so I could clip a piece of it off and use its gel to help heal my burns. I used it a lot!

Not only can Aloe Vera help heal minor burns, it also has the capability to clean the air in your house or room of choice. For indoor locations, choose a sunny window but not a hot exposure like a west or south window. Move your plant to a brighter spot in the darker winter months. For outside locations be cautious as different varieties are more cold sensitive than others. If you do grow them outdoors, they do best in USDA zones 8 to 11. Since Las Vegas is USDA zone 9a, we are good to plant them outdoors but keep them out of direct sunlight which can burn the plant and bring them indoors before the first frost.

Hmmm... as I look around my cubicle at the office, I realize I have a great spot for one. Guess I'll be going shopping!



Winchester, Colorado  
Justin Van Cleef