

Interiorscaping

How To “Landscape” The INSIDE Of Your House

Ever notice how lots of people will spend loads of time and money on their outdoor landscaping, but when it comes to house plants, they'll just randomly toss something green here or there?

Or how some people spend days fussing over just the right shade of paint to coordinate with their wallpaper border and sofa, then grab the first cheap house plant that comes along?

It's time to break out of this mold by landscaping the INSIDE of your house.

That's right. There's no reason why you can't use many of the principles in outdoor landscape design to come up with an interesting arrangement of house plants. Call it “interiorscaping,” if you will.

Less work than outside gardening

One of the best parts about this type of gardening is that you don't have to dig any holes! And there are no weeds or rabbits to worry about!!

A neatly planned interior landscape can spruce up a room for a lot less money than an antique vase or an expensive oil painting. Plus, indoor plants can help add humidity and oxygen to the air, and there's even been some NASA research showing that many house plants have the ability to remove such pollutants as benzene and formaldehyde from indoor air.

Several psychological studies also have shown that productivity and moods improve when plants are around.

How to get started

The basic idea of interior landscaping isn't a whole lot different than outdoor landscaping, although light (or lack of it) plays a bit more of an important role.

A good way to start is with a larger plant to serve as the focal point for a plant grouping. Palms, ficus, bamboo, dracaena (corn plant) and Norfolk Island pines all make good choices.

Next, surround this focal point with smaller pots of colorful plants. The effect is somewhat like a tree underplanted with a bed of flowers.

Colorful plants could range from bloomers like bromeliads, begonias, cyclamen, primroses and kalanchoe to colorful-foliage plants like the purple passion plant, Moses in a boat, caladium, polka dot plants and crotons.

But don't stop there. Rotate other plants in and out of the main display as they hit their peak period.

If you grow orchids or African violets, bring them out the bedroom or kitchen when they come into bloom.

At the end of the outdoor growing season, pot up a few coleus, impatiens or geraniums and rotate them into the display.

Around Christmas, poinsettias are cheap, plentiful and add brilliant color in many shades for weeks. As the poinsettias fade, have some forced bulbs ready to go.

At Country Market, you'll find a variety of plants in bloom no matter what time of year you're looking for them — even in the dead of winter.

Bloomers don't last forever

The hard part here is getting into the mindset that some of these colorful plants are going to be throw-aways. Bulbs like paperwhites won't bloom again, and plants such as poinsettias and cyclamens

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take a lot of work and care to get to rebloom.

The good part, though, is that most of these bloomers only cost a few dollars -- no more of an investment than the annual flowers you plant outside that die off at the first fall frost. Most of these also cost less than a bunch of cut flowers that last only a week or so.

One little “trick-of-the-trade” is keeping plants in their original pots and then setting the pots in a larger container in your indoor display. Camouflage the individual pots by covering the edges with a little pine-bark mulch or Spanish moss.

For one thing, that gives you extra space to set a few smaller plants (pots and all) around the inner lip of the container to give the effect of a groundcover at the base of the larger plant.

It also lets you show off a decorative container, it prevents you from having to pot up small pots in their own individual decorative pots, and it makes it easy to move plants around.

Where to put your “indoor gardens”

One obvious place for your indoor plant arrangement is in an empty corner. Add to the floor grouping by hanging a Christmas cactus, ivy or other trailing plant overhead.

Try flanking either side of an archway with something tall (i.e. ficus, dracaena, palm) and then surrounding those pots with color, just like you'd do with an arbor outside. You could even use small trellises to train mandevillas or jasmines up alongside an archway or doorway.

Why not an indoor water garden?

Another hot, new trend is adding an indoor water garden. This is easier than you think and adds the amazing, relaxing sound of water right to your living room.

The easiest way is to simply add a tabletop fountain to your indoor plant display. Country Market has a large selection of choices that you simply add water to and plug in.

For more energetic gardeners, there are larger containers that serve as your indoor “pond.” Pumps and fountains can be added to this garden, which can then be incorporated into your house plant arrangement.

If you're still leery about a water garden indoors, think of it as an aquarium surrounded by plants!

Versatility on demand

If you don't like what you come up with at first, don't be afraid to move a few things around. It's easier than digging up plants outside.

Also don't forget to mix the textures of the plants -- just like outside landscaping. If you have something wispy and open (such as a Norfolk Island pine), fill in next to it with something that's more bushy and shrubby (such as a colorful croton).

And watch the light requirements, especially for those focal plants and other plants that you want to keep as the backbone or “skeleton” of your indoor display. If you've got a Florida room or a bright room with a big, sunny, south-facing window, light is no restriction. Go crazy.

But if you're stuck with low light, your skeleton plantings are probably best limited to such choices as peace lilies, aglaonema (Chinese evergreen), dieffenbachia, dracaenas, snake plants, pothos and possibly philodendron.

And if you've got low light AND a brown thumb, try a few cast iron plants. You'll have to try hard to kill one of them.