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### Add beauty, serenity to home with plants

BY JANA SOELDNER DANGER

**P**lants and flowers add something special to a home. They can make it more appealing and more healthful for those who live there, as well as more attractive to potential buyers.

"Live plants are very pleasing in an interior design," says interior designer Osirys Mendez, who with her partner Sabrina Vela owns Mendez-Vela Design Collection in Miami. "They can create a tranquil environment and encourage relaxation. They're proven to reduce stress, and they improve air quality."

"We need nature in our homes to feel in balance within ourselves," says Paloma Teppa, founder of Plant the Future, a botanical design firm, art gallery and plant boutique in Miami. "Plants help with physical and mental health, and they bring great energy to a space."

They can also make the home quieter. "They're a sound barrier," Mendez says. "Also, caring for something, needing to water the plant or clipping it has psychological benefit. It's like having a pet."

#### ATTRACTIVE TO BUYERS

Despite the hot real estate market, it's still a good idea to make a home that's for sale as attractive as possible. Developers and individual property owners are seeing the benefit of adding plants to the residences they are trying to sell.

During the height of the pandemic, when everyone was staying home full time, many people developed a stronger appreciation for nature in their personal environments, says Candace Jorritsma, director of sales and mar-

keting for El-Ad National Properties, developer of ALINA Residences Boca Raton, a luxury condominium project. "You're also seeing more interest in wellness, physical and mental. It's caused us to adjust our thinking about what's important."

ALINA will have a serenity garden and amenity deck with living plants, as well as walls with greenery. "Indoor-outdoor living was one of our themes from the beginning, and it took on new importance," Jorritsma adds. "People find a certain serenity in plants and natural things."

Plants are important for private sellers, too. "The biggest trend for 2022 has been bringing the inspiration of nature inside your home," says home stager Sandra Holmes of Luxe Home Staging & Design in Dania Beach. "We always use greenery and flowers, whether they're real or faux. They warm up a space and give a feeling of calmness."

#### WHERE TO PUT THEM

Where should you place plants and flowers?

"Every single room should have a plant so you can connect with the energy," Teppa says. "Put them on the dining table, on the balcony and in the kitchen."

"The living room and family room are where we use real trees, or silk ones," Holmes says. "In larger homes, there are big corners, and it helps fill the space."

Live walls, in which plants create a vertical natural design, are very much in fashion, Mendez says. "You can do a whole wall, or a design on a wall. You can also mix live plants, like ferns and succulents, with freeze-dried moss."

Vertical greenery, whether on walls or done with



Luxe Home Staging & Design

Whether real or faux, plants can create a feeling of calmness.

hanging plants, is indeed popular, Holmes says. "It gives a boho look that's trendy with millennials."

Faux plants won't filter the air, but they can be beautiful and add to an interior design.

Today's faux plants can be hard to tell from living ones. "Silk flowers and plants now look very real," Holmes says. "They've come a long way in the last few years."

Freeze-dried flowers and moss, which are different from plants allowed to dry on their own, are another alternative, Mendez says. They are real plants treated with a chemical process to preserve them in a form that's very close to their appearance when they were living. "They look real," Mendez says, and adds, "But nothing takes the place of natural plants."

#### LIVE OR FAUX?

How to decide whether you want live or faux plants?

"Think about how much

maintenance you want to do," Teppa says.

"Normally, we ask the client if they have a green thumb," Holmes says. "If you're going to invest in live plants, you have to be able to take care of them. Many clients love faux. They never have to water again." "If you're a snowbird, you'll need to get a service to take care of your live plants," Vela notes. Not so for shorter trips: "There are a lot of self-watering planters that work when you're traveling," Mendez says.

#### RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT SPOT

Not every live plant will

thrive in every space.

"Pick the place where you want to put the plant and go from there," Mendez says.

Before choosing a plant, don't be afraid to ask for advice at a nursery. What kind of soil does the plant need? How often will it need to be watered? How much light does it require? How often should you fertilize it?

"We use a lot of desert plants," Teppa says. "They're very low maintenance."

"Succulents are a nice way of adding green," Mendez says.

"There's a huge rave on succulents right now,"

Holmes says.

You probably won't be able to grow most flowers indoors.

"They love direct sunlight," Teppa says. A couple of exceptions: orchids and bromeliads. "They do perfectly well indoors."

Don't forget cut flowers. "Cut them at an angle," Vela says.

To pep them up: "Always put ice cubes into the water," Mendez says. "It peeps them up."

Enjoy your greenery. "Plants can be a very inexpensive way of decorating your interiors," Mendez says. "It can be fun creating aesthetically pleasing arrangements."



Tato Gomez/Plant the Future

A large plant can add life to a bare spot in a home.