



WONDER PLANTS

YOUR URBAN JUNGLE INTERIOR

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Lannoo

FOREWORD

We believe you can find a good place for plants in every interior. Some living greenery in our home is something we can no longer do without, it's not too bold to say that green is the new black. Because green is here to stay. Green is the ultimate interior hero. Green is at the heart of our busy homes, a calm point in our all-too-hectic schedules. It makes us think, look, stand still by the beauty and ultimate force that is mother nature. More green, growing plants in our homes - that's what we want for our own home and yours as well. Green is present in every part of our lives. We read about it in interior design magazines, see flowers and plants in stores, restaurants and cafés. Plants are good for us; they inspire daydreams of nature and add colour to our interiors, and they literally make us healthier because plants purify our air.

Whether you live in the northern or southern hemisphere, whether your house is more minimal in style, bohemian, eclectic or has sleek, modern lines, whether you live in a big house with huge windows or a cosy, compact studio, every interior can incorporate a dash of green. As with many things in life, it's about making the right choices and we are here to help you with your green choices.

Ultimate Wonderplants brings back the most exquisite green interiors from *Wonderplants* and *Wonderplants 2*. We have selected twenty-five ultimate green interiors, that will make you want to create your own green jungle.

We aim to inspire you, share our passion for plants, show you which plants do best in different locations, which will flourish in a dark corner and which will brighten up your bathroom. This book tells you how to create and care for your urban jungle. In *Ultimate Wonderplants* we want to encourage you to follow your intuition in your own style with plants that you find beautiful so you can decide whether you opt for a subtle approach or prefer to go all the way. This book provides you with lots of information about the best plants to choose, how to care for your plants and what plants can do for you and your environment. We're delighted to share our passion for fantastic interiors and plants, each with its own story and each beautifully unique.

Irene and Judith

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GLOSSARY

GREEN, GREY & GLAMOROUS

ANTWERP BE

Right in the heart of the Antwerp Diamond Quarter is the home of an architect with a green thumb. His spacious triplex house was renovated extensively by Dirk Engelen, who respected what was already there. The lusciously thriving greenery softens the atmosphere of the prevalently present concrete. A paragon of urban glamour.

The Jerusalem of the North is what people sometimes call the district at the edge of Antwerp's City Park. The strong presence of the Orthodox Jewish community, together with the local diamond traders, gives this district an idiosyncratic and pleasant ambiance. "It is a fascinating environment," according to Dirk Engelen, founder and practicing architect at B-architecten. "There is a wonderful mix of cultures here, with schools next to synagogues in the same street, and I experience a kind of friendly aloofness here which I greatly appreciate. This is a very pleasant place to live."

In a street lined with rows of plane trees, Dirk bought a building from the 1970s over nine years ago, and he currently lives on the top three floors. "It was originally an office building of the Health Insurance Fund," Dirk

says, "completely built in concrete, with a boxy, unimaginative structure and a balcony on each floor." The plan? To create his own world behind that grey wall, to infuse it with a completely new, vibrant feel while utilising and emphasising the original qualities of the building. Objective achieved: the core of the building was opened up, its spaciousness restored.

"The house had been renovated at an earlier stage, some time in the 1980s," Dirk relates, "including suspended ceilings. The building became congested. But behind that renovation, we discovered the beautiful original concrete ceiling, which we restored to its previous glory; that eventually defined the essence of the current dwelling. We have extended its former grandeur, but in a contemporary way. With big open spaces and new stairs within the home."











Quite early in the renovation process, it became clear that the abundance of nature really had to have an important place, and for several reasons.

“From an architectural point of view, I thought it was interesting to extend the green environment which we live in into the building,” says Dirk. “Ecological considerations also played a role, because plants add peace and quiet in an indoor environment.”

Dirk specifically took into account the huge Swiss cheese plant that he had grown in his former residence, which would receive a prominent place in the living room after this renovation. What was then a three-year old specimen has by now grown so big that it extends into the space above, and is responsible for that touch of glamour in the formerly brutish interior.

On the ground floor of the triplex residence, the architect installed a huge planter where the sentry plant constitutes a subtle, yet important part of the kitchen, with its white, concrete-poured flooring and concrete kitchen island. In addition, there is the patio that provides plenty of space for outdoor plants, preferably plants that require little pruning. And finally, there is the green roof, which also relies on significant support from the City of Antwerp. It not only provides solid insulation, it also benefits public health and the environment – and is also a very beautiful solution.

A win-win situation, according to Dirk. “The multitude and variety of plants have a soothing effect, and maintaining them is sheer relaxation to me. That way I can sustain everything with relative ease and a great deal of fun.”

PARIS TEXAS

ANTWERP BE

She's a Parisian architect; he's a Texan artist. Nathalie Wolberg and Tim Stokes live and work together in a building in Antwerp that they named Paris Texas, situated in the notorious maritime district, around the corner from the imposing Museum Aan de Stroom. They each have their own studio in the building and provide short-term rentals for photoshoots and pop-up shops. This building also harbours a vibrant life between colourful walls in hidden corners, and under bright neon lights, but most of all, living greenery. The border between interior and exterior is almost confusingly blurred.

The decision to relocate to Antwerp was easy for these two. "We were absolutely smitten by the energy and creativity that the city exudes," Nathalie smiles. The building had housed an import-export business for years and was in dire need of thorough renovations. The original structure was kept largely intact, transformed into a modular environment where light, colour and texture define the atmosphere in the various rooms. The building now combines an exhibition hall, three studios, the kitchen as a communal area, a library, a guest room and an apartment on the first floor.

Without a doubt, the heart of Paris Texas is the garden. "I had been dreaming for years of a garden in an exotic style," Nathalie says. Landscape architects Bart and Pieter made her dream come true, with flair and panache. The mustard-yellow colour

of the garden wall underlines that tropical feeling.

Nathalie has always loved spending time in nature, wild and exotic, preferably as close to a jungle as possible. Less enchanted by houseplants, she decided to integrate a sort of garden into the heart of the home, incorporating trees and outdoor plants and reserving a striking spot for the incredibly huge dragon tree, which has been planted rather than potted. Tim's studio is home to numerous cacti, succulents and other plants that peep out between the artworks. In the apartment, the greenery almost becomes a graphic element against the pastel pink backdrop.

Tim's interest in plants developed gradually. His passion for plants began when he started helping Nathalie care for the plants in their home. Nathalie primarily focuses on taking care of the garden, which offers a gorgeous décor.







GREEN STATEMENTS

MILAN IT

Bright white walls, polished concrete, cast-iron constructions and statements incorporating plants. The ultimate basis for a glamorous interplay between structures and colour, volume and light. A former factory in Milan is now home and workplace to artist Antonino Sciortino, where he proudly showcases his own creations.

Glimpsing the interior of Antonino Sciortino's home is a wonderful experience, since the artist himself has designed numerous artistic interiors. Even when he was just eight years old, he helped his father forge iron in the Palermo studio. His passion for dance brought him to Rome, where he spent his time shaping iron into design objects between choreography sessions, before moving to a former factory in a suburb of Milan. The house he lives and works in now is the perfect location to display his own work, a place where old and new design converge and greenery runs rampant. The green has an amazing impact in this interior against the backdrop of the pale, cool palette of colours and the iron structures. Some of the impressively tall cacti seem to have melded organically with the architecture. The massive aloe in the living room is over 100 years old; its immense bulk provides imposing balance.





Plants are more or less permanent fixtures within our interior. Nearly everyone has a plant or something green that grows at home. Having plants makes us happy, and it is also very good for your health. Some just simply cannot get enough, and their collection of plants just keeps on growing, while others consider just a single plant at home to be the perfect amount of greenery.

Why do we do this, surround ourselves with greenery? We yearn for nature, for a place where we can find peace. We seek a place where we feel connected to what it is essentially all about: our origins. In previous times, we regularly went out and explored nature, yet nowadays we still yearn for our daily dose of green. Inspired by this desire, we are developing an increased appreciation of greenery in our immediate surroundings, in close proximity to the places we work or live.

Moreover, we seek this not only in spots where greenery is already abundant. We also use methods in cities to enjoy greenery more, both indoors and outdoors. We create vistas that cut straight through a house, looking out onto trees, plants and green rooftops. We install huge picture windows, turning nature into a framed painting and we build our living spaces around a patio, or an indoor garden, literally bringing nature inside the home. We surround our living spaces with plants that we place in such a way that they are clearly visible from various angles. Even given the limited space for greenery, this still makes it possible to create that feeling of being surrounded by greenery.

We are exploring the full potential and diversity of greenery. That could include large houseplants and trees. Or, it may mean even an entire wall covered with plants—another grand gesture in which minimal space is used for a maximum green effect. The plant is something that truly deserves to be seen. Accordingly, we spend more time on gorgeous variations of existing or known types and common houseplants, and we are always looking for unique specimens and distinctive plants with character.

A mundane houseplant picked up from a garden centre or nursery has actually fallen out of favour. To be sure, plants are at their most beautiful when they have stayed with us for some time. That is when they develop character, once they have adjusted to their surroundings. It can be observed from the position of the leaves as well as the stem or stalk growing towards the light. Nothing is more beautiful than an elongated stem bending towards the light. That does not mean that you should not buy any plants at a garden centre, but rather that you should specifically select plants that are still developing. If you want a distinctive plant with its own shape, you need patience. I prefer to buy my plants from some of my favourite growers or the older garden centres, where plants sometimes spend extended periods of time in one spot before being sold. Furthermore, you should also scour the Internet for plants that are offered second-hand. Fortunately, we are seeing fully matured plants more and more often in plant stores.

One thing is certain, though. Plants bring life to the places where we live, work and play, so we consider them indispensable in our interiors.



GREEN, GREY & GLAMOUROUS

1 SWISS CHEESE PLANT

Monstera deliciosa

2 SPIDER ALOE

Aloe vera spinosissima

3 SUCCULENTS

Echeveria elegans

4 SENTRY PLANT

Agave americana

5 FRAGRANT DRACAENA

Dracaena fragrans

6 SNAKE PLANT or
MOTHER-IN-LAW'S TONGUE

Sansevieria trifasciata

7 DESERT CABBAGE

Kalanchoe NF thyrsiflora



We adore those bold statements! One really big houseplant immediately achieves a major impact. This will not just create the feeling of a jungle of plants, but also the feeling that you can hide in it. That feeling alone is already a reason to invest in a seriously large plant. You can also start a little smaller and allow the plant to grow and expand by giving it space. A Swiss cheese plant (*Monstera deliciosa*) or another *Philodendron* would be very suitable for that, because they continue to grow. This interior in Antwerp truly brings out the beauty of these giants due to the contrast between the gorgeous, round shapes of the leaf and the roughness of the concrete. In addition, the significantly overgrown succulents also provide a wondrous statement. They can be left outdoors in summer months. However, if it rains hard for a long time, remember to move them to dry shelter, or else they will drown.

ASIAN DREAM

1 BANYAN FIG
Ficus benghalensis

2 COCONUT TREE
Cocos nucifera

3 PHILODENDRON
Philodendron 'Imperial Red'

4 ANTHURIUM or LACELEAF
Anthurium

5 FAN PALM or ROUND
LEAF FAN PALM
Livistona rotundifolia

6 CALADIUM
Caladium

7 CHERRY LAUREL
Prunus laurocerasus

8 BOUGAINVILLE
Bougainvillea

9 PURPLE SHAMROCK
Oxalis triangularis



Tropical climates have the advantage in that many plants will already feel at home there because of the favourable temperature and humidity. That means that indoor and outdoor plants combine very well in big cities located in tropical countries, and this usually provides for gorgeous vegetation. The circumstances are ideal for these frequently indigenous plants. Plants that are for sale as houseplants in slightly cooler countries could basically just be retrieved straight out of the local plant life there. A nice example is the coconut tree (*Cocos nucifera*), which might struggle as a houseplant in cooler climates, particularly in winter months. Here in these tropical climates, they can just grow around the home, preferably in open soil.





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