

# Decor

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## RIGHT NOW AWARE



A strong indoor pot plant can blend with your interior (left), as well as create a focal point. New solutions to traditional plants in the garden, means we're looking for spaces that can take lush and soft greens." And so while lushness is petering out in our gardens, that sense of abundance is moving indoors. It's a case of being of one step removed, Paul says, from the gardens of the Middle East, where mini-oases are formed behind high walls and gates.



## Potted slant

House plants are on the rise as designers boldly grow where no one has before.

**WHILE THE DROUGHT** has been turning the country into a dust bowl, it's also been having a surprising effect on interior design, says Paul Hecker of Melbourne design firm Hecker Phelan & Guthrie. "The difficulty of keeping things alive outside, of having to consider drought-tolerant plants in the garden, means we're looking for spaces that can take lush and soft greens." And so while lushness is petering out in our gardens, that sense of abundance is moving indoors. It's a case of being of one step removed, Paul says, from the gardens of the Middle East, where mini-oases are formed behind high walls and gates.

But trying to convince some clients of introducing such elements can take some doing. "Whenever we mention the words 'pot plant' to any of them, they cringe," he says. "But then we show them images of what we're talking about and that changes their minds." Those images could be of Ivy, Justin Hemmes' new bar and hotel complex in Sydney, "where we've gone absolutely mad - we could, as there's someone there to look after the plants all the time". Or of a domestic interior in which soft, green maidenhair ferns mass together to form the focal point of a dining room, in much the same way an artwork would.

Rather than an afterthought, the indoor plant is becoming a feature - a softening element in what may be a very architectural space. "And we always use plants that take some care - that need watering every few days, feeding once a week, dead leaves pulling off every now and then. It's important for people to feel involved, for them to realise they're looking after a living thing. It's good for the soul. The thing with spiky plants is that they don't need looking after and are easy to ignore - you almost don't see them after a while, until you notice the spider webs."

In pretty well any setting, says Paul, a mass of indoor plants can send a subliminal message that "this is a place that's looked after and lived in, people are caring for it - it feels considered". Plants also, he says, are an easy and inexpensive way to alter the feel of a room - move them around, bring new ones in with the change of the seasons, put them on stands or in big pots.

While Hecker Phelan & Guthrie often design stands for the plants, containers can be anything from a glass vase which show the soil to enamel saucepans. "There are lots of opportunities for creativity," enthuses Paul.

## IN THE GREEN LANE

**DOUBLE STANDARDS** call it a way of streamlining our lives, of fitting more into our ever-decreasing living spaces, or maybe just a gimmick. Sofa beds make sense, but a recent crop of furnishings takes multi-tasking to a whole new level.

There's Moroso's Little Garden by Tokujin Yoshioka for one - a small metal table that sits in a flowerpot (left) - not to mention Serralunga's Missed Tree vases (centre left) by Jean-Marie Massaud from Space (spacefurniture.com), which not only act as foliage vessels, but also sculptural pieces. Meanwhile, its latest offering, the Holly All (not shown) by Philippe Starck, is a slightly retro-looking chair that doubles as a planter.

