

Evergreen

A man with a full red beard and hair, wearing a light blue shirt, dark suspenders, and striped trousers, stands in a lush indoor garden. He is holding a small plant in his left hand and a bouquet of purple flowers in his right. The garden is filled with various green plants, including ferns, palms, and broad-leafed species. A blue metal frame structure is visible in the background, and a table with a white top and thin legs holds a large green vase with purple flowers, a small green bowl, and other decorative items. The floor is covered with a patterned tile. The overall atmosphere is vibrant and natural.

Living
with Plants

Swooning Over Nature



The education of a gardener begins with aesthetics. More than ever though, gardening has become important as not only an activity or hobby, but as an attitude, punctuated by sustainable and wholesome living. Swooning a new generation of gardeners, modern homes are transforming into green habitats and city dwellers' points of refuge, bubbling with character and warmth. Demanding intimacy, attention, and care, plants inspire us to become more intuitive dwellers; reflecting owners' capabilities of cohabitation and engagement with the natural world. Indeed, setting up the right conditions for plants to breath and develop permits that a home's inhabitants, and its guests, too, feel welcome and at ease.

Beyond the fashionable factor, modern gardens are maximizing horticultural potential. From floral workshops to cactus fares and farmers' markets almost inflicting the green thumb upon us, to whole residential projects designed around the essential component of bamboo, to cafés mimicking overgrown orchards, and restaurants flaunting their locally-sourced initiatives. Because the modern world demands a detachment from our natural environment, our relationship with nature is an ever-more comforting, tactile, and important one.

Gardens, whether in the form of a petite collection of herbs, geraniums tucked inside a balcony container, or a sprawling six-acre oasis, all have some kind of stylistic vision behind them. They can be subtle and instinctive, they can be contrasting and confusing, and they can be full-on self-realizations. In our indoor gardens, we often seek colors and textures, and often we are rewarded with a new relationship to the space that both we and our plants inhabit. On our balconies and terraces, we look for a revered room to call our own. In our backyards, the greatest joy comes from plucking the first fruit from a nurtured tree. For the professional gardener, the highest reward comes with a garden's graceful progression through the seasons. Perhaps what makes gardening so satisfying is its continuity, because, unlike other activities, a gardener's work is never really complete. Florists, gardeners, and landscape architects around the world share a capability in transforming an empty lot into something better; envisioning something more, and infusing it with new life. At the same time, they are inspiring a new breed of plant-focused stores, magazines, and digital channels. Gardening, as a reminder of evanescence and imperfection, defines the utmost luxury of humility.

In indoor environments, plants benefit health and wellbeing by filtering the air of toxins and replenishing

oxygen levels. And they invite optimism, too. The deep green tint of ivy leaves, curling down from a top shelf to cast shadows at just the right time of day, or the scent of spring's first tulips, bunched up in a tabletop vase, make for simple pleasures. During the winter, a fern can illuminate a darkened corner; a collection of homegrown herbs can color in our kitchen, and our homemade dishes, too. Throughout this book, readers can get a grasp on the basics of making and maintaining a patch of green: an empty kitchen windowsill; an unused balcony; a rejected backyard. Some properties collected in these pages are very much built to the beat of nature's drum; others more subtly incorporate the garden. Some are family homes; others are artist's studios. While gardens speak to aesthetics, they are also about discovery, in that they not only adorn a place, but act as a tie between us and the places we inhabit.

Turning a leaf towards sustainable living, we step into the backyards, rooftops, and empty lots that are being reimagined as ecological playing ground; the grounds of both harvested produce and the bringing-together of cultural communities. In the great outdoors, we tour public gardens, botanical gardens, wide-open cactus parks, and ecological farms, and introduce the people behind them. Gardens might be products of their environment, defined by temperature, materials, and means, but as such they nurture our craving for locality, for being as close as possible to the root of things. Especially in urban environments, the "excavation" of nature and the revalorizing of open space into sustainable landscapes opens new streams of interaction between us and the land.

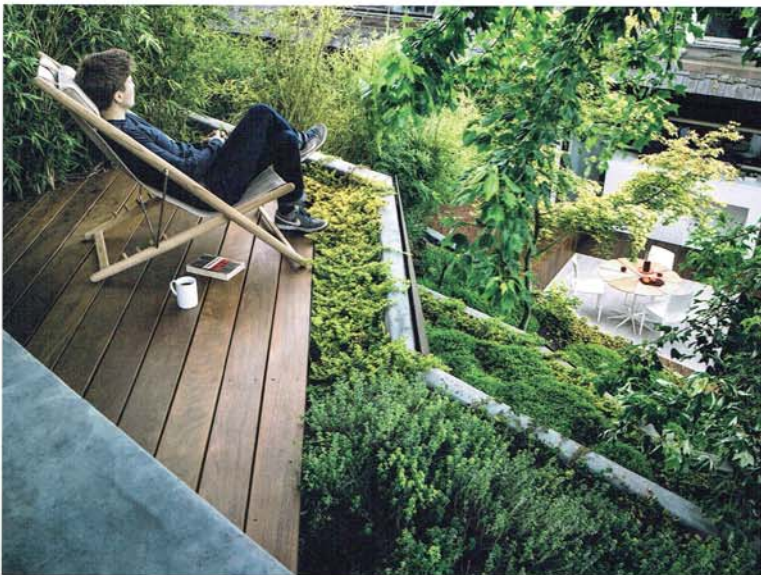
For beginner gardeners, but for seasoned gardeners, too, the soundest advice is to garden as you can. To get your bearings, to get to know your plants, and to understand their likes and dislikes through smell and touch. As the famed twentieth century landscape gardener Russell Page wrote in his book *The Education of a Gardener*, the old expression of having a "green thumb" or "green fingers" describes "the art of communicating the subtle energies of love to prosper a living plant." It is with time that we come to recognize a plant's cultural needs, through idiosyncrasies of color, texture, and habit, he continues. Indeed, fears of overwatering and under-nurturing speak true to all stories of plants and people at the start of their relationship. In a combination of guidance and inspiration, our sustaining of a green habitat naturally begins to take its course, and with that, a greener lifestyle. The great outdoors is literally at your fingertips. —

Hilgard Garden: From Concrete Jungle to Zen Escape

Mary Barenfeld
Architecture



Berkeley,
CA, United States



— Designed as an extended living space, this modernist garden room is tucked between its neighbors' backyards. The site's eye-catching steep slope is set up as a meandering path adorned with sculptural Japanese maple trees that lead to an upper seating area. An area for entertaining at the garden's base is level with the living room, intended as a seamless continuation of the indoor lounging area. Night lighting, too, makes quite the impact. Backlit triangular LED lights installed on the steps draw the eye to the higher seating area, which boasts views across San Francisco's East Bay. The incorporation of concrete into the design of the garden is a nod to the Bay Area's modern edge, coupled with sustainable building practices, such as greywater drainage and an irrigation system. —



Overcoming Gardener's Angst



From blank canvas to green hideout:
Steps to organic success



Green It Like You Mean It

Consider the areas in your space that would benefit from some greening, and the different amounts of natural sunlight that these receive—whether direct or indirect—and look for plants that will thrive in these spots.

Think about the varying temperatures of your home. Different plants have different needs: placing a cool-temperature plant near a hot-air vent will make it weak and droopy, while placing a warm-temperature plant in a cooler spot will turn its leaves yellow.

Good to know: The grocery store might be closest, but it is worth locating shops that specialize in plants and garden utilities. Here you are most likely to find healthy plants and sound specialist advice. —●

Greening the Home from the Inside Out

Shopping for houseplants can be a nerve-wrecking task: the charm of creating an exotic home can easily wear thin in the haze of care labels, unknown specimens, and the wildly varying prices that you are faced with. Throw in variables such as local weather conditions, a cramped, possibly dimly lit space, and frequent trips away from home, and the thrill of dressing up your space with foliage can quickly pass. Gardener's angst is real. And it is fueled by our modern, everyday

activities that, by an ever-growing margin, demand a detachment from nature. Let's be clear: there is no such thing as a no-maintenance plant—but there are plants to match different environments and care calendars, and even some that thrive on a little neglect.

For beginner gardeners, it is important to get a grasp on the essentials. After this, keeping plants happy often comes down to intuition. Gardening is, after all, a combination of education and experience. —●





My advice is always to begin by looking at your favorite color, even if you don't have a favorite plant—then move onto heights.

Isabelle Palmer, The Balcony Gardener



Dirt on Your Hands

Working with soil can put many people off gardening. The idea of providing plants with the right amount of minerals and nutrients can seem distant in a city context. Anything being planted will require potting mix, though. Annuals—including vegetables, flowers, and fruit—work well with a general soilless organic potting mix, while bigger, longer-living bushes and fruit trees should be potted in a soil-based mix, which slowly releases nutrients. Mixes can be enriched with organic fertilizer.

Good to know: Hydrogel crystals are an excellent addition to your balcony plants'

potting mix, as they absorb excess water and prevent plants from drying out, which is helpful for windy balconies. —●



Nurture Nature

No matter how neatly potted your plants may be, insects are bound to make an appearance. To best tackle the situation, working with nature, and understanding that a pest-predator balance can be beneficial is key. Flowering container herbs attract predator insects, while a birdbath can also encourage insects and birds. The more nurturing you are towards your plants (while minimizing the use of pesticides), the more your garden will thrive. If slugs are

a problem, placing wool pellets or cups of beer in the soil is a good way to collect them. When containers are close together, it is important to act quickly, as pests can quickly be transported from plant to plant.

Good to know: Hedges make superb bird and insect attractions, providing space for creatures to take cover, while fruit and berry trees and shrubs can act as feeding spots for wildlife. —●



Water, Water

To make life easier on the balcony, connecting a hose will be a lot quicker than a watering can. Drip irrigation systems with a timer are a good way for staying on top of watering routines or when away from home. On rooftops, collecting rainwater in a rain barrel will save a lot of heavy lifting. Planters with built-in reservoirs will keep thirsty plants such as tomatoes and zucchini happy for several days. —●

Architect Nathalie Wolberg on creating an alchemy between the in- and outdoors:

1. Extend the color of your walls from in- to outdoors, like we did from the kitchen to the garden
2. Incorporate plants in the indoor area closest to your garden
3. Remove visual barriers to the outside by installing large windows and sliding doors
4. Place your plants right up against the glass to give the feeling of being confronted by nature



Fern

Polypodiopsida

With their soft branched stems and curled fronds, ferns recall a mysterious, prehistoric age of flora. Some species date back as far as the Devonian period; others have remained unchanged over millions of years, like the *Osmunda claytoniana*, or interrupted fern. Shaded nooks under evergreen trees are ideal points for growth, as the mulch and tree roots provide the kind of spacing and drainage necessary for delicate fern roots. Swaying in communion with the breeze, they imbue gardens with the atmosphere of a forgotten forest, wild and majestic. ●

Origin Devonian period · Height Small varieties can be under 1 cm, and larger types range between 10-25 m high · Watering schedule Regularly enough so the soil does not dry out. Spray mist onto the stems



Pumpkin

Cucurbita pepo

From soups and pies to Halloween's jack-o'-lanterns, pumpkins have a variety of uses, featuring prominently in festivals and traditional events. Given their size, spacious vegetable gardens are a prerequisite for comfortable growth, but miniature varieties can be planted in smaller patches, too. Frost must be absolutely avoided, but the vined plants need 75 to 100 days to grow, meaning the best time to plant them is directly after winter when the ground is warm. ●

Origin North America · Height 30-90 cm
Watering schedule Frequently when first planted, then once a week

