

Using Real Trees to Bring Nature Indoors

ニューヨークやシンガポールなど世界各地では、建物の中に本物の木を取り入れる建築が注目されています。植物は屋外で育てるものというイメージがありますが、建築の一部として取り入れることで、人と自然との新しい関わり方を生み出そうとする動きが広がっています。こうした空間には、どのような魅力や役割があるのでしょうか。あなたなら、木のある建物で過ごしてみたいと思いますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

There is a growing movement worldwide to use plants in building design to establish closer connections with nature and soften hard city styles. The movement also seeks to improve designs to help protect the environment and increase personal wellness.

Many of the efforts by architects and designers have centered on one natural [element](#): trees.

Examples of such design can be found in many places, including New York City. A building in Manhattan that houses the Ford Foundation has a 12-story light-filled entrance area, or atrium. It is also filled with plants and flowers including magnolias, eucalyptus, jacaranda, cryptomeria, iron bark and pear trees.

Another example sits within New York City's Brookfield Place shopping center. The center's main atrium includes a collection of 12-meter-tall Washingtonia palm trees.

In Singapore, the city-state's Jewel Changi airport offers travelers an inviting environment. It has 2,500 trees native to nations including Madagascar, Australia, Malaysia and Indonesia. The airport includes a 2.4-hectare indoor forest with walking paths.

Some apartments and mixed-use buildings are also putting trees and other greenery into their designs. Such buildings are sometimes called "greenscrapers," a term that comes from the word "skyscraper."

In Milan, Italy, architect Stefano Boeri designed Bosco Verticale, a 44-story building with 800 trees and other greenery. In the Netherlands, he also built the Trudo Vertical Forest. This is a low-income apartment building with trees growing on all sides.

Similar changes are also happening inside private homes. In some, trees are brought right indoors. In others, outdoor trees are carefully placed as important partners in the building plan.

Some architects even build homes around [existing](#) trees. Others plant one or more trees inside the home. And some architects or designers imagine natural settings indoors by using parts of trees. These designs are meant to create the look and feel of real wood, while bringing feelings of peace and calm.

A calm heart of the home

Ryoko Okada is an architect at New York City's Oda Architecture. She told The Associated Press that she and her co-workers aim to bring outdoor elements indoors as often as they can.

"There's nothing more calming than being surrounded by nature..." Okada said. She added that a living tree indoors can bring peace and happiness as people watch it grow and change.

Framing the views with existing trees

Another design example came from KAA Design Group in Los Angeles. A team from the company created a modern home that uses the [property's](#) existing trees, such as cork oaks, rare Torrey pines, and magnolias.

One very large, old cork oak sits in the center of the property. At first, the owners did not like the look and said they wanted the tree gone. One of the company's partners, Grant Kirkpatrick, had to persuade the homeowners to keep it. Kirkpatrick explained he succeeded by pointing out that the tree was "a 300-year-old antique that should be [featured](#) rather than removed."

The driveway on that property also offers a calming design. A black pine tree rises up from the driveway like a piece of natural art. In addition, views from almost every window in the house feature the beautiful nature outdoors.

Things to consider

Okada says she suggests people do not plant a full-size tree in their home without first seeking expert advice. She notes that a living tree will only do well if certain conditions – such as air, light and soil – are right.

Okada added that a living tree “...needs to be supported by proper [infrastructure](#) to stay alive and avoid home damage.” She also urges people to heavily research a tree’s natural environment to avoid drawing in unwanted pests.

Kirkpatrick noted that planting a tree indoors can be difficult. He explained that at least 1.2 meters of soil depth is needed, along with lots of natural light and the right temperature.

Other ways to use trees besides having a live one

Kirkpatrick said he worked on one property that experienced a serious fire in 2016. His team decided to use parts from one of the burned manzanita trees in the interior design. The piece was painted black and placed inside the property. He said it now represents an eye-catching, natural art piece.

Kim Cook reported this story for the Associated Press from New York, New York. Anna Matteo adapted it for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. element (n.) an important part of something

Trust is an important element of any strong relationship.

2. existing (adj.) already present or being used

The frozen food company improved its existing system instead of replacing it.

3. property (n.) land or buildings owned by someone

My aunt and uncle in Washington built a fence around their property.

4. feature (v.) to include or show something as an important part

This summer, the museum will feature art from art students at local high schools and colleges.

5. infrastructure (n.) the basic systems and structures needed for something to work

The town repaired and updated its infrastructure before allowing new businesses in.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What is the main goal of using plants and trees in building design?
2. Why did Grant Kirkpatrick persuade the homeowners to keep the cork oak?
3. What conditions does Ryoko Okada say a living indoor tree needs?
4. How can cities include more nature in new buildings?
5. Do you think indoor plants can improve people's health and happiness? Explain.