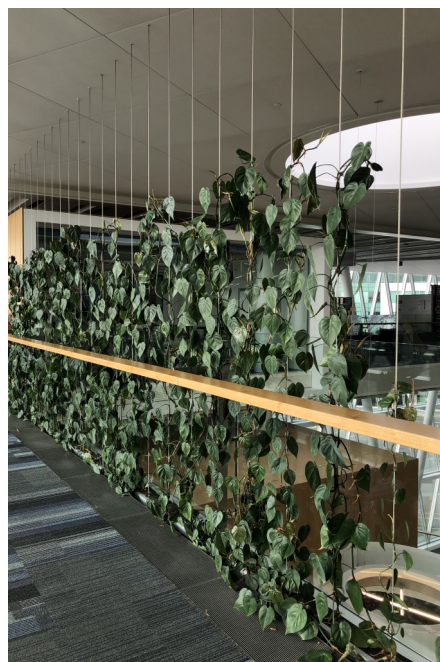




Plantscapes with purpose

Design considerations when integrating
live plants in commercial interior design



Plantscapes with purpose

Hire Plants have been installing and maintaining plants in a large range of commercial indoor settings for over 40 years.

This guide is designed to help designers and facilities managers understand and consider the key factors which contribute to the successful use of plants in commercial interiors.

Why use plants in commercial interior design?

1. People have a strong emotional response to nature

Biophilia is the idea that humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature.

Biophilic Design can reduce stress, enhance creativity and clarity of thought, improve our well-being and expedite healing; in today's urban life these qualities are ever so important.⁽¹⁾

In our modern built environments, people are experiencing a growing disconnection from regular contact with nature. The increasing presence of live plants in our daily surroundings is now bridging this gap, offering a connection to our fundamental need for nature. This infusion of nature positively impacts our overall perception of the spaces we inhabit.

Improved mental engagement and overall happiness are reportedly realised by visual connections with nature. Reconnecting people with nature through biophilic design plays a role in our improved health and well-being.

In spaces such as waiting areas, hospitality areas and open plan offices, where the volume of people fluctuates, plants literally bring 'consistency of life' to an area and help create a more stable and consistent impression of an environment, regardless of the number of people and level of energy present.



Studies have shown that “offices with very high perceived productivity, health, and overall comfort of the work area [presented] a human-centred approach to interior design [...] and implemented biophilic design principles.”⁽²⁾



¹ 14 Patterns of Biophilic Design Improving Health & Well-Being in the Built Environment, 2014 Terrapin Bright Green LLC

² The Rise of Office Design in High-Performance, Open-Plan Environments, Buildings 2019

The use of plants and green features such as vertical gardens and plant dividers are key to improving spatial comfort and overall satisfaction. In open plan offices they allow people to work more efficiently, help with the balance of collaborative working and the need for work tasks requiring privacy and concentration.



In hospitality, today's customers are looking for a more customised experience. Millennials more specifically, who will make up the three quarters of the workforce by 2025 are especially sensitive to memorable moments.

People value and seek experiences that go above and beyond the usual service which is no longer enough to create loyal guests.

“Biophilic design and décor are strong factors to create memorable guest experiences and therefore should be a main driver in design choices for the hospitality industry.”⁽³⁾

Hospitality venues that can support a feeling of escape, comfort and socialisation with plants can support better guest experiences that will lead to increased patronage and revenues.

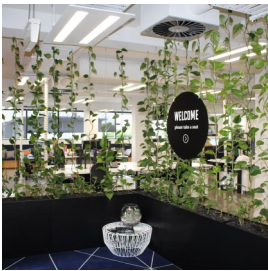
2. Plants meet multiple practical solutions



The use of plants in interior commercial design can simultaneously serve a number of practical purposes, making them a versatile component in achieving design objectives.

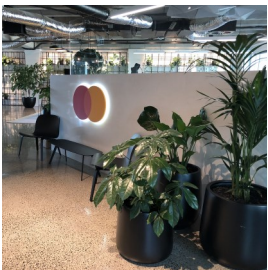
Entrances & wayfinding.

The placement of plants acts as a useful visual cue to direct people's movement. From making it obvious where an entrance is to creating a demarcation between thoroughfares and circulation areas, plants can signal where people should move and directs sight lines.



Screening & soft partitioning.

The irregular outlines and mixed density of foliage means that as a screen or partition, plants effectively create a visual barrier as needed without being overly dense or completely obstructive. They can also effectively absorb and deflect a level of sound. In spaces such as waiting areas or open plan offices, plants help with the balances of collaborative working and the need for privacy and concentration.



Branding.

The use of plants, and planters can support branding directly (through the use of container design and colour), and indirectly through association with nature and greenery.

Styling.

Whether formal, contemporary, industrial or informal, the design style of a space is complimented with plants and containers. Container options can make plants fit into any situation. Simply making a place more appealing to be in encourages people's overall experience and general enjoyment of environments where they spend time.

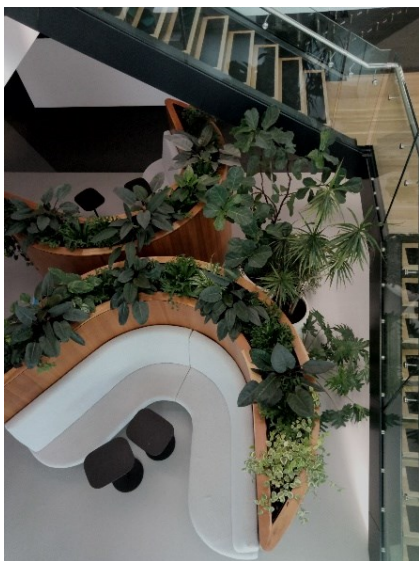


Versatility.

In the case of floor standing plant installations, the added benefit of being moveable provides the versatility to adapt to changing requirements of different spaces.

Practical considerations when planning and designing indoor plantscapes

When planning to use plants in interior commercial design, giving thought to a number of practical considerations ensures that a planting design is workable and fit for purpose.



Planter size.

The most overlooked consideration in interior plantscape design is what the plants need to grow in. Adequate space for the grow containers and sub irrigation system needs to be allowed for. Larger plants need more soil for a healthy root system to develop, to retain adequate water and for stability.

With the exception of large interior gardens, indoor plants are generally kept in their growing containers which are then staged inside the decorative planter. While space needs to be allowed for these separate containers, it provides for healthier plants and makes plants easier to exchange as required.

Watering considerations.

How plants are watered needs to be understood when considering placement and design of plantscapes. Planters need to be waterproofed, and generally a liner or sub irrigation system that the plant sits in inside the planter or presentation container is used. This allows the plant access to enough water between servicing visits and also protects other interior elements from water damage.

If larger interior installations such as plant walls and interior gardens are to be run on an automated irrigation system, water connection points and drainage needs must also be considered.

Growing conditions.

Various conditions will impact suitable plant choices. Plants vary in their tolerance of shade, natural light levels, strong sunlight, temperature, humidity and exposure to wind. Simply being indoors is enough for many varieties of plants (such as fruit trees and most natives) to rapidly deteriorate, drop leaves and become diseased.

Other environmental effects.

Other environmental effects such as proximity to heaters and vents, opening hours (e.g. closed with the lights off all day) can impact the effectiveness of plants and must be worked through during the design phase.



Accessibility.

Accessibility for installation of plants can sometimes be overlooked. In some situations height equipment may be required, and in other situations stair and lift access may limit the size of what can initially be installed. Once installed, access for servicing and swapping plants is needed to provide the care and maintenance necessary.

Availability.

Plants need to be suited to the New Zealand environment. There are some restrictions on what is available and what can be imported into New Zealand. Increasingly stricter importation quarantine and inspection requirements has meant that some previously available plant types are no longer available in New Zealand.

What makes a good plantscape?

When using plants within interior commercial design, some of the elements which go into a good plantscape and make it effective in the long term include:



Achieves a purpose.

Having a clear reason for using plants is the first place to start. This purpose is understood by asking 'what will people be doing in this area?', 'how do they want to feel?', 'what practical requirements need to be met with the use of plants?'

Adds to people's experience.

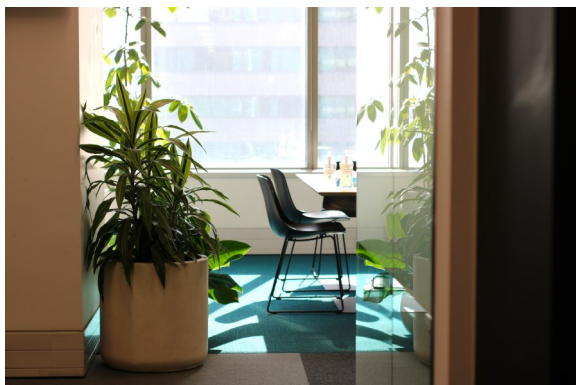
Whether it is for customers, general public or employees, thinking about how plants add to people's enjoyment ensures that plants are well located for maximum visual and practical benefit.

Is sustainable.

Plant choices need to ensure that plants will thrive and will be cost effective in the long term. The ongoing investment of maintaining plants (correlating with volume) also needs to be sustainable from a client's perspective.

Consistent quality and presentation.

Continuity of quality and presentation is important in maintaining the overall impact of plants. One of the big advantages of hiring plants is that their replacement is usually included in the hire pricing meaning plants are more likely to be swapped faster and won't be left in an unhealthy state.



Minimal disruption to maintain.

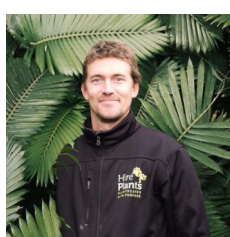
Thought needs to be given to how and when plants will be serviced and maintained. Health and safety requirements may mean that access to plants at height for instance may need to take place when other people aren't around.

Involve us from design to installation

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