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Attention, late bloomers: You can still learn the ABCs of using vegetation as decoration. Take note as designers dish the dirt.



Don't Fear Going All-In

Frank de Biasi is such an enthusiast for the power of plants—“They bring literal life to a space”—that he didn't skimp on the greenery in the living room of his Park Avenue apartment. To create a tropical-garden vibe, he anchored the corners with arcing palms, sprinkled in short snake plants, and defined the area with a philodendron climbing a screen. Combined with the room's floral prints and bold strokes of color, “it's an escape from the city's drab grayness.”

PHOTOGRAPHERS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: STEPHEN KENT JOHNSON; FERNANDO BENGOCHEA; VICTORIA PEARSON

Know the Limitations

For the foyer of a Los Angeles home, Peter Dunham chose box-wood—the classic garden shrub—for its low, compact shape: “In this busy entry, anything tall would be intrusive.” Set in a rustic terra-cotta pot and pruned into a ball to echo the circles on the settee's print, the easy-to-trim-and-train topiary (it thrives indoors!) welcomes guests with a “happy horticultural hello,” he says. “It signals that this is a home where caring and nurturing happen.”



Go Over the Top

David Netto's solution for adding drama to the double-height living room of a boho New York City apartment: a full-size palm tree. “The room is old-world Russian and exotic—Tolstoy would feel right at home,” he says. “I needed an exclamation point, something to delight and dominate. You don't get that with an ashtray.” Set amid sumptuous textiles and embroidered curtains, the plain terra-cotta planter “is perfect. There's already enough fancy here.”

