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The Demand for Nature-Driven Design

Esther Rootgering, product developer at window covering manufacturer Cordoua, sees several trends driving the surge in interest in nature-inspired design: from a growing focus on wellness to the aesthetic-induced shift away from urban living. She pointed out distinct advantages in using natural materials rather than synthetics.

"One key benefit lies in the irregular features, unique appearance and tactile feel that natural materials provide," she said. "Each piece of jute, linen, and paper is inherently distinct, contributing to a sense of individuality and uniqueness in your space."

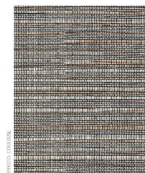
Designing with materials like these also improves sustainability. Using responsibly farmed and harvested plant-based fibers with minimal environmental impact helps in creating window treatments and other products that are both beautiful and eco-friendly. Cordoua's founder, Michael Jones, founder of window covering manufacturer Hartmann & Forbes.



contribute to the overall health and well-being of that space," he said. In that vein, Rootgering has witnessed a noticeable shift toward window treatments that evoke nature or are made from natural materials, creating what she calls "a harmonious bridge between indoors spaces and the natural world."

The consumer's appreciation for natural aesthetics ties with another trend that Rootgering sees impacting interior design today: "It aligns with the rising trend of green interiors," where individuals are striving to incorporate nature-inspired elements into their daily lives for a sense of tranquility and balance," she said.

Jones echoes that sentiment: "Designers and their clients are becoming more interested in how products are made, what they are made of and how the products they bring into their homes."



Peterson has organized a first-of-its-kind Science in Design Symposium taking place at this year's High Point Market taking place on October 12-14. The experiential three-day event will bring architects, designers and product developers together to learn about and experiment with biophilic design and neuroscience principles, with practical intelligence and other neurologists discussing how corporations react to different environments. Peterson's firm is also launching a new certification program at the moment, with two design classes on biophilic and neurobiophilic design.

Bringing Nature Alive in Design

For interior designers, workrooms and window treatment professionals, opportunities abound to bring consumers the natural elements that will do their mind and body good. Ideas like the following are a good start!

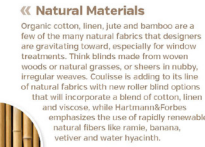
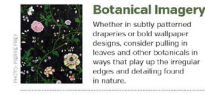
Botanical Imagery
 Whether it's subtly patterned draperies or bold wallpaper designs, consider pulling in leaves and other botanical motifs in ways that play up the irregular edges and detailing found in nature.

The Colors of the World
 Color schemes that evoke the earth and sea can transport homeowners to places that nourish both body and soul. Look for opportunities to use a spectrum of shades of blue and green, along with warm neutrals in earth tones.

Natural Materials
 Organic cotton, linen, jute and bamboo are a few of the many natural fabrics that designers are gravitating toward, especially for window treatments. Think blinds made from woven woods or natural grasses, or sheers in ruffled, irregular weaves. Cautious is adding to its line of natural fabrics with new roller blind options that will incorporate a blend of cotton, linen and viscose, while Hartmann & Forbes emphasizes the use of rapidly renewable natural fibers like ramie, bamboo, velvet and water hyacinth.

Biophilic Principles
 From upholstery to wallcoverings and draperies, the opportunities to build in biophilic design are endless. There are now options emerging all the time, like Ecker's fabric- and wallpaper collection called Equatorial Geometry, inspired by the patterns and vegetation found in the tropics.

A Window to the World
 Homeowners want to experience the great outdoors even when they can't be there, and that brings their windows front and center. Peterson is a big fan of window seats in full buildings. "Every one of your homes has to have a window seat!" while Rootgering believes "the allure of bringing the outdoors indoors through window treatments is a trend that will



Reconnect & Recharge

The verdict is in: Nature-inspired design boosts our health and wellness

If you find yourself drawn to your patio for fresh air or taking breaks from work to gaze out the window, you can thank your early ancestors. Since we humans first walked the earth, we've been hard-wired to interact with our natural environment. And that's not by chance. It's because connecting with nature improves our physical and mental health—a fact that science now confirms.

Biophilic Design Comes to the Fore

One of the biggest movements in the quest to incorporate nature into interior design is the concept of biophilia, a word whose roots loosely translate to "love of nature."

"Biophilic design is the attempt to bring our inherent affinity made the home," explained Mike Peterson, co-founder of Science in Design and president of Visionary Design Marketing. As he pointed out, it was only about 10,000 years ago that humans began to commune in city-like environments with walls and ceilings. "Prior to that, it was only us and nature."

Our inherent tendency to crave nature is driving industry professionals to design with an eye on mimicking the elements our brains gravitate toward.

"Biophilic design is a phenomenal opportunity for the design industry to create a level of homeostasis in our lives, because we actually live in a very unnatural world," Peterson said. "The straight lines and right angles of modern-day buildings contrast starkly with the details and irregularities that exist in nature."

"If you look at an oak tree with all those points on the leaves, and you put thousands of them together, you have something wildly attractive to our brains—the perfect example of organized complexity," he said. "We now know that our brains are naturally attracted to organized complexity, because it's what we've lived with for millions of years."

Good for the Body and Soul

As it turns out, our brains know what's good for us, as research confirms a strong tie between exposure to nature and better physical and mental health. Thanks to advances in technology, it's easy to measure that connection scientifically through cardio function, galvanic skin response and other biomarkers.

Consider the results of a Harvard study on how our environment impacts the ability to complete mentally taxing tasks. Participants that operated in a virtually simulated biophilic environment responded better to these stressors than those in a less natural setting, both physically and psychologically. "Other studies reveal similar health benefits to being exposed to nature, from slowing down our heart rate to reducing our levels of the stress hormone cortisol."

Dr. Claudia Miller, the head of environmental medicine at the University of Texas at San Antonio, says architects and designers have a greater ability to improve public health than medical professionals. Peterson shared that belief goes right along with the emergence of fields like environmental psychology (the study of how the built environment impacts people) and neuroaesthetics (a newer area of neuroscience that studies how our brains respond to art).



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