



Designer: KAA Design

NATURE AND HOME: BIOPHILIA IN DESIGN

Wellness goes beyond mindful eating and active lifestyles — our surroundings have a profound impact on both our physical and emotional health. Namely, we need to get in better touch with nature through biophilic design.

“Biophilia is our innate desire or tendency to commune with or be close to nature,” says Interior Designer Sarah Barnard of Sarah Barnard Design. “We are comforted by nature, and we all understand that on some level.”

“Study after study shows that in rooms that look onto nature — a tree, some plants, a patch of grass — people have lower cortisol. Rooms that incorporate nature provide the same benefits.”

Barnard prioritizes biophilia in much of her work, including within an ocean-facing penthouse in California, where she picked out low-profile furniture to preserve the sightline to the sea. Another recommendation of hers is to use light fixtures or art pieces reminiscent of nature to further the theme.

Of course, moving outside offers additional opportunities to integrate nature within the home.



Designer: Sarah Barnard Design | Photo Credit: Steven Dewall

An outdoor “room”

The function of the backyard has expanded and, accordingly, requires much the same flourish as the interior.



Designer: Land Morphology | Photo Credit: Land Morphology

“It’s not just about making a wall disappear, it’s about creating a true outdoor room,” describes Anthony Laney, Founding Partner of Laney LA.

Treating it as another room within the home and carefully selecting furniture and décor to match allows it to act as a true living space, whereas unthoughtful design can result in missed opportunities.

“We do a lot of homes right on the ocean, and you see a lot of these balconies where it’s just a foot of space with a glass guardrail. Nobody’s hanging out on them. In my theory, that’s because it’s not a true outdoor room — it’s just a dead-end balcony.”

With living in mind, it’s important to consider “function before form,” as does Richard Hartlage, Founding Principal and CEO of landscape architecture firm Land Morphology.

“We don’t do a project without a fire feature these days,” observes Hartlage. He also lists outdoor kitchens, dining spaces, and swimming pools as other highly sought-after amenities.

Fragrant plants, like florals, are another frequent request. Fragrants “go beyond beauty — they create an atmosphere,” describes Hartlage.

When considering the overall atmosphere of the exterior, ambitious concepts can further enhance the outdoor experience.

The sky is (literally) the limit

The recent demand for larger properties provides opportunity for bold ideas.

“On a larger property, there’s the potential to create destinations. Rather than putting the swimming pool right outside the house, place it up a hill and create a pleasant walking trail,” advises Hartlage.

Conversely, for those in urban areas and tight on space, creative solutions can offer their own magic. One of Laney’s most exciting projects involves a “Disappearing Pool” in Manhattan Beach, California.

“At the press of a button, the floor of the pool can go down and extend its depth. Alternatively, it can come up for playing sports, come up even higher to transform into a splash pad, or it can level with the pool deck and become a dry dance floor,” describes Laney.

Keeping in mind that many homes are accommodating multi-purposes within their rooms, clever, space-saving resolutions are quite appealing for those wanting to maximize the use of their backyards.

“I think that adaptability is growing increasingly relevant. The dining room is now the office. Spaces no longer have a stationary nametag — they need to perform multiple uses.”

Beyond backyard destinations and “Disappearing Pools,” visionary design can come in the form of exceptional, nature-related concepts.

A project by architecture firm KAA Design, “Tower Grove Drive” is sited along a hillside. Rather than treating

the home as a house atop a hill, it was built to feel like one with the landscape through the deliberate placement of terraces across the multi-level home, all the way up to a vegetated rooftop.

“The vegetated roof acts as an extension of the landscape through the house itself so that it feels contextual to the site. It’s not alien — it’s very much a part of the hill,” explains Duan Tran, Partner at KAA Design.

Because of the remoteness of the rooftop garden, it’s made to be extremely low maintenance. This was achieved using plants native to Southern California.

As an added benefit, the butterfly roof is at a 15-degree angle, perfectly positioned for its solar panels. In fact, the entire home was built to be as nurturing to nature as nature is to its residents.

Biophilia: why now?

When asked why biophilia is having its moment, Tran stated that the current desire to connect with nature is, of course, exacerbated with the pandemic and extended stints indoors.

Evolving lifestyles have offered some silver linings, such as added personal time. For some, however, reduced commutes have diminished time spent outdoors, so it only makes sense the rising drive for nature-focused spaces. When considering biophilia’s mental and physical benefits, its ideals should become essential to all forms of design.





Designer: Land Morphology | Photo Credit: Rob Cardillo Photography

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

Ideas from Duan Tran of KAA Design

- 1 **SUSTAINABLE ENERGY**
The use of solar panels and geothermal energy create a self-sufficient and conscious home
- 2 **THOUGHTFUL DESIGN**
Clever shading techniques and passive ventilation keep a home naturally cool and minimize the use of air conditioning
- 3 **NATURAL ELEMENTS**
Native plants are less disruptive of their surrounding environments and require less resources
- 4 **UP-AND-COMING**
Prefabrication and 3D printing will greatly reduce labor, along with the environmental costs that come with it



Designer: Laney LA



Designer: KAA Design



Designer: Traci Connell Interiors

○ **Serving Inspiration:** Featured in our previous issue, Traci Connell of Traci Connell Interiors was an initial inspiration on the topic of biophilia, having predicted that plants and natural materials would be trends to watch in the coming years.

"I love when nature becomes art," says Connell, who incorporates plants within much of her interior design. She advises making selections that relate to the surrounding geography of a home.