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Biophilic BLISS

Nature meets design in this on-trend interior style that is here to stay, writes **Trisha Harinath**



Biophilic interiors reconnect people with nature, Urban Blend Interiors.



FLOW AND LAYOUT

"Biophilic design is also about flow and spatial layout – it invites the outside in, but also encourages us to slow down and feel more present in our space." – **Leanne Van Niekerk, LVN Interiors**

What started as a way to help us bring the outdoors in during the COVID pandemic, when the world outside was shut down to us, has now become a sought-after interior design trend that is gaining traction in all areas of the home. "Biophilic design is an approach to interior design that draws inspiration from nature. It aims to strengthen the connection between humans and the natural world," says Johann De Waal, marketing manager at KARE Johannesburg. He adds that this design style encompasses more than just houseplants – it focuses on incorporating organic shapes, natural light, earthy textures and sustainable materials to create spaces that enhance wellbeing, promoting calmness and fostering creativity.

LET NATURE INSPIRE YOU

"Biophilic design doesn't have to be all or nothing. It's not about copying a Pinterest image, but rather about tuning into how you want to feel in your home. Nature is the guide,>

WHY BIOPHILIC INTERIORS

"Biophilic design gained traction post-pandemic as people craved deeper connections with nature and harmony at home. As lifestyles became more digital, design shifted towards grounding, emotionally nourishing aesthetics. It's also aligned with growing eco-consciousness where people want interiors that are beautiful and better for the planet." – **Johann De Waal, KARE Johannesburg**



Coffee Table Cono Ceramic and Swivel Armchair Cosy Yellow, KARE Johannesburg.



Biophilic design meets bush retreat – light, texture, nature in harmony, Giava Interiors.

Organic textures, bold greenery and bespoke design rooted in nature, Giava Interiors.



but you get to tell the story,” emphasises Leanne Van Niekerk, creative director and owner of LVN Interiors. On the essential components of biophilic design, Van Niekerk highlights that natural light is key. “Then layer in organic materials like wood and stone, indoor plants, flowing water features and soft earthy textures,” she adds.

De Waal explains the importance of texture when working with the biophilic design trend. “Texture and sensory experiences are equally important – think tactile surfaces, flowing shapes and layered lighting as well, which mimics sunlight and shadow,” he says.

Urban Blend Interiors’ founder Bulelwa Jordan-Tati mentions that biophilic design draws on both direct and indirect experiences of nature to create calming, life-enhancing indoor spaces. Apart from the elements already mentioned, for direct experiences, she points to fresh air and ventilation as essential because they encourage good airflow and a sense of connection to the outdoors. On indirect experiences, which >

BIOPHILIC DESIGN THROUGH ART

As a finishing touch to achieving the biophilic style, consider the art you use in your home. **Bulelwa Jordan-Tati, Urban Blend Interiors,** explains: “Display artwork that reflects nature – landscapes, animals, bold botanical prints or abstract art inspired by nature and organic forms. Soft tones are also a great way to enhance biophilic design and the tranquil, grounded feel of the room. By blending these elements, you can transform your home into a sanctuary that nurtures both body and mind, bringing the outdoors in every day.”



Casamance Exploration wallcovering, Giava Interiors.

Sofa Livia Melange Cream and Wall Lamp Balance Circle, KARE Johannesburg.



“Biophilic design is grounded in a deep respect for the natural world. It is a sensory experience inspired by nature and elevated by thoughtful design,” – Vinette Diab Nicholls

PLAY WITH PLANTS

Urban Blend Interiors’ Bulelwa Jordan-Tati shares how to include plants into your space to get the ideal look and enhance the biophilic trend further.

- Add mirrors near your plants to visually amplify the amount of greenery in the space. The reflection from the mirrors will also make the space appear bigger and more open.
- Don’t just group plants in one spot – play with height, length and depth. For example, if you have an open-plan lounge, consider incorporating a tall tree in a large pot. This plays with height. In kitchens or bathrooms, use hanging plants on shelves to add depth and movement. Mixing sizes and levels gives your greenery a curated, designer feel.



Bring in the outside with windows that frame the landscape, LVN Interiors.



A space designed along biophilic principles encourages calmness, Urban Blend Interiors

will include materials, textures, patterns, shapes, forms and colours, she mentions that when considering colour palettes, look to earthy tones and an organic selection of hues that reflect oceans, forests and natural landscapes. "Together, the direct and indirect elements will create interiors that feel grounded, nurturing and harmonious, echoing the mental and physical benefits of being outdoors."

SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS LEAD THE WAY

The biophilic design trend does not just include nature-inspired objects, plants and colour inspired by the

outdoors. A signature element of this trend is the inclusion of sustainable materials as well. "Biophilic design is grounded in a deep respect for the natural world. It is a sensory experience inspired by nature and elevated by thoughtful design. Using synthetic or unsustainable materials contradicts the philosophy," states Vinette Diab Nicholls, founder and head designer at Giava Interiors. She mentions that some sustainable materials her company uses include FSC-certified wood, bamboo, cork, recycled glass, rattan, hemp and organic cotton or linen textiles. "We also work with South African artisans to create custom pieces from locally sourced,

eco-conscious materials, supporting both sustainability and local craftsmanship," she adds. "Beauty and responsibility can and often go hand in hand when we use materials that respect and protect nature," says Beulah Hlatshwayo, interior designer and renovation expert at Beautiful Spaces with Beulah. She explains that by sourcing materials that are renewable, biodegradable and have a lower environmental footprint, "we are doing our bit not only for our homes, but for the planet as well".>

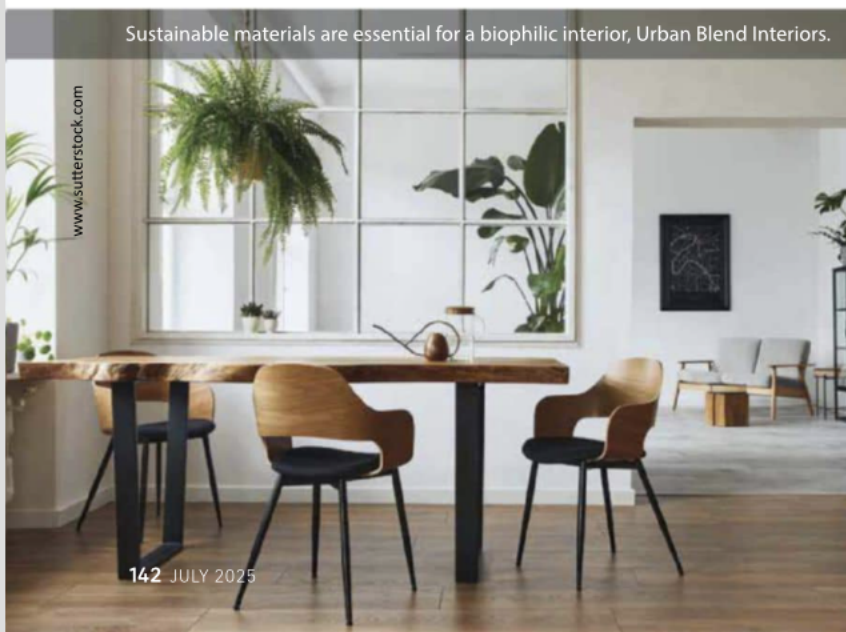
BUILD WITH INTENTION

Biophilic design extends to the architecture of a home as well. **Beulah Hlatshwayo, Beautiful Spaces with Beulah**, offers this advice: "When building, ensure you have made provision, if possible, for large windows that frame the landscape or one from where you can watch the sunrise/sunset. Opt for stacking doors, which allow you to physically connect to the outside."

GOOD TO KNOW

"Biophilic design lowers stress, improves mood and enhances focus." – **Vinette Diab Nicholls, Giava Interiors**

"Biophilic design is an approach to interior design that draws inspiration from nature. It aims to strengthen the connection between humans and the natural world." – Johann De Waal



Sustainable materials are essential for a biophilic interior, Urban Blend Interiors.



Swivel Armchair Eyeball, KARE Johannesburg.



Calm, coastal roots with layered greenery, natural light and bespoke pieces, Giava Interiors.



Organic shapes are a must for this interior style, Beautiful Spaces with Beulah.



Textured wallcoverings in natural colours serve the biophilic design style well, LVN Interiors.

ACHIEVING THE LOOK

There are various ways to use this design trend and achieve the desired look where your spaces offer a real and meaningful connection with nature and still look curated and sophisticated. Diab Nicholls says you can start with natural light. “Swap heavy curtains for linen sheers to let the light flood in. Layer in greenery by mixing heights and species such as floor-standing fiddle leaf fig trees, trailing pothos and herbs in the kitchen. And always choose quality over quantity – instead of cluttering a room with accessories, invest in fewer, well-crafted pieces.”

Hlatshwayo recommends bringing in organic shapes by using sculptural lighting paired with curvy furniture, which, she says, is a big hit at the moment. “Use life-size plants or faux trees, about 1.7m in height, and couple this with large artisanal pots instead of the usual small, random tabletop plants. You should also contrast natural elements against sleek contemporary design, for example, in a minimalistic kitchen, you can use slatted wooden panelling as a backsplash.”

Van Niekerk expresses that it is always good to start small. “Start with small changes – swap out artificial light for warmer, natural options, layer in tactile materials like linen, jute or raw timber and look for ways to open up space – literally or visually – to the outdoors. Think of it as creating a little sanctuary that reflects nature’s rhythm.” 🌿

With thanks to Beautiful Spaces with Beulah, Giava Interiors, KARE Johannesburg, LVN Interiors, and Urban Blend Interiors