

ASK THE EXPERTS

From interiors and gardening to DIY and eco design, our team answer your questions



INTERIOR DESIGN

SALLIE CHATER

Founder and director of her own interior design company, Interiorsat58, Sallie is the latest expert to join our panel. She believes in creating luxurious, elegant and original interiors at affordable prices

PLANT PRINTS

Q I love all the botanical prints around at the moment, but how can I use them in a room without feeling completely overwhelmed by greenery?



Balance out the bold impact of botanical prints by keeping to a limited colour palette

● We also answer questions on architecture, craft, gardening and mortgages. Email your questions to us at house.beautiful@hearst.co.uk or post to House Beautiful, LSQ London, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ

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A Leaf and botanical prints have become one of the biggest trends of the past few years and they show no sign of losing popularity. This is because they add such vibrancy and personality to a room, and even just a few pieces can enliven neutral schemes.

There are so many variations of the style – in fact, there's a print to suit almost every room. Introduce the look by adding accessories such as cushions, artwork and ceramic objects that will complement your scheme. This way, the theme won't take over.

Try not to mix leaf prints. For instance, avoid using palms alongside less tropical leaves such as ferns or others from more temperate zones. And to be certain your chosen leaf prints don't overwhelm, try to keep to one base colour, such as emerald or moss green. This way they will work together to create a unified scheme.

Keep other colours in the room to a minimum too, to avoid the tones fighting with each other, and spread the pieces out so that your leaf print items aren't all in one area. This will create balance and you'll find the pieces will work together to enhance your existing scheme.

Using tropical prints, which are often oversized and dramatic, can present a great opportunity to include other fun and quirky pieces such as pineapples, cactuses and succulents.

If you're looking for a more understated style, cushions in a simple leaf design, like GP&J Baker's Shadow Fern, would work well alongside a multiple grid of framed prints. Oka has some great classic prints that would look fantastic – or, as a stylish but affordable solution, you could frame a piece of botanical wallpaper.



Houseplants not only look great, many can purify the air in your home too



ECO DESIGN

OLIVER HEATH

The UK's leading expert in sustainable architecture and interior design, and a familiar face on TV

HEALTHY AIR

Q I've read that indoor air quality can be between two and five times more polluted than the air outside. Why is this? And how can I keep the environment in my home cleaner?

A Health and well-being are gaining importance for everyone, and new guides, such as the WELL Building Standard, are becoming more widely known for promoting healthy indoor environments.

Many factors can contribute to poor air quality within a building, from pollutants on shoes and proximity to main roads to materials and products within the construction itself. Paints, carpets and furniture can contain airborne chemicals, some with adverse health effects, so choose furniture and products with low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) to help avoid bringing some pollutants into your home.

Natural cleaning products, such as those from Bio D, Method and Ecover, are believed to be better for you, your home and its

air quality. And even plants can help. The NASA Clean Air Study showed that some plants help to filter out harmful toxins. English ivy, mother-in-law's tongue, peace lilies and chrysanthemums are particularly effective.

Keeping your home well-ventilated is key. Open windows whenever possible or invest in continuous running extraction fans, or a HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filter system, which can absorb up to 99.9 per cent of contaminants. Prices range from £80 to £600.

Finally, damp and mould can also have an impact. You can improve ventilation and use dehumidifiers to prevent damp, but with so many possible reasons for mould, it's best to consult an expert if it's getting out of hand. Some moulds can be toxic and may cause health problems if left or removed incorrectly. ▶