

# HOUSE AND LEISURE

THE PLEASURE OF LIVING HERE NOW

ALL THE  
LATEST TECH  
FOR YOUR  
SMART HOME

MODERN BOTANICALS

UP THE ANTE  
WITH AIR PLANTS

FROM MOMENTS  
OF QUIET REFLECTION  
TO TIME SPENT WITH FAMILY,  
THIS IS HL'S EDIT OF LIFE'S  
MOST IMPORTANT  
INDULGENCES

*the*  
**LUXURY**  
*of now*

HOUSE AND LEISURE CO. ZA  
NOVEMBER 2016  
R49.90 (incl. VAT) Monthly  
R499.00 (Other countries) R120.00





# airs & graces

Naturally beguiling, low-maintenance and with a myriad species to pick from, it's little wonder that air plants are the botanical must-haves *du jour*, offering a modern spin on greening up your interiors

TEXT MANDY ALLEN  
 PRODUCTION MARISSA PRETORIUS/OPUSSTUDIO.CO.ZA  
 STYLING SVEN ALBERDING  
 PHOTOGRAPHS GREG COX/BUREAUX.CO.ZA  
 LOCATION BABYLONSTOREN

## MAGIC REALISM

**Idea:** With their almost otherworldly allure, air plants are the perfect subject to inspire your creativity. Just about any object or surface can be the medium to display these exotic botanicals. Here they have been affixed to a distressed textured pedestal in an evocative fusion of industrial and organic.

**How To:** Because air plants do not rely on soil to grow, they can be attached with craft wire or transparent fishing gut to just about anything. Maximise the impact by setting them against sculptural stumps of driftwood or man-made objects that reveal the patina of time.

LEFT Spanish moss, *Tillandsia carminea*, *Tillandsia fuchsii* and *Tillandsia ignesia*.

## PLANT PROFILE

- These exotic, sometimes bizarre-looking plants are part of the Bromeliad family and originate largely from South America.
- They are scientifically classified as *Tillandsias* but are commonly referred to as air plants.
- There are more than 550 species of air plants.
- Air plants are low-maintenance and do not require soil to grow, absorbing all their water and nutrients through their leaf system. This makes them extremely versatile for decorating within most environments.

## HANGING GARDENS

**Idea:** A configuration of air plants suspended above the bathtub is an exotic and ever-evolving art installation. Don't limit the idea of layering to your soft furnishings and colour palette: air plants are complemented by other tropical species such as flowering orchids and citrus blossoms with their intensely coloured leaves, so intersperse these for a touch of drama. A woven basket also turns into a whimsical living display when draped with air plants.

**How To:** Hook screws are easily hung from the ceiling: secure lightweight air plants with transparent fishing gut for an ethereal effect and display the heavier species on windowsills and flat surfaces.

## OPPOSITE

Plants include *Cattleya* orchids, Spanish moss ('Old Man's Beard'), *Tillandsia lorentziana*, *Tillandsia tricolor*, *Tillandsia 'Houston'*, *Tillandsia neglecta*, *Tillandsia setacea* and *Tillandsia ignesia*.



## RAIN FOREST

**Idea:** Transform your shower into a tropical paradise. Air plants generally enjoy a humid environment but do allow some air to circulate so they have a chance to dry off. Access to at least six hours of indirect sunlight will also ensure that they thrive.

**How To:** Suspend the plants from bathroom-specific hooks attached to the shower surface (these usually come ready-to-use with double-sided tape) or screw hooks into the ceiling and suspend plants with transparent fishing gut.

Staghorn ferns, Spanish moss and *Tillandsia ionantha fuego*.



### SHOW & TELL

**Idea:** Make air plants the main event on a hallway table or other surface, instead of figurines, objets and other predictable homeware accessories. Display your living installation in a hallway, bathroom, living room or home office.

**How To:** Compose the air plants in a selection of clear, round glass containers that are identical in shape but of varying sizes and forms (bowls, small measuring jugs and even vintage clear-glass teacups). This will ensure visual synergy while imbuing the installation with a personalised, quirky touch.

**CARING FOR YOUR TILLANDSIAS**

Air plant aficionado Marissa Pretorius of Opus Studio shares the low-down on how to care for this fascinating species...

- Air plants are easy to care for since they absorb moisture from the air.
  - They do still need watering: hang them in the shower for no-effort care or spritz them using a spray bottle every second day.
  - Air plants will benefit from being dunked in room-temperature tap water for about 30 minutes every third week. Once they've had a good soak, let them dry in a strong-light environment.
  - Placing air plants in a vessel with a small amount of water will allow them to produce their own moisture (the 'self-watering terrarium' effect). Make sure your chosen container is not sealed – they need circulating air to survive.
  - Does the colour of the plant look too grey? A light misting will restore its green hue.
  - Air plants prefer bright, filtered light. The more indirect (but bright) light, the more they will thrive.
  - If your air plant is looking poorly and dry, give it an overnight soak. Shake off the excess moisture so it doesn't retain too much water, which can cause rot.
  - My personal all-time favourite is Spanish moss, also known as Old Man's Beard.
- opusstudio.co.za  
@opus\_studio

**NATURE STUDY**

**Idea:** Create an indoor miniature garden with a stripped-back, modern aesthetic – a great distraction if the view from your window is less than desirable.

**How To:** This contemporary twist on the classic terrarium concept sees a variety of air plants arranged in laboratory-style glass beakers, vases and preserve jars. Create a diaphanous effect by hanging a few plants in front of a window; use transparent fishing gut and hooks to make a super-simple 'floating' installation.



**IN GOOD COMPANY**

**Idea:** There's strength in numbers – particularly if you're a plant (no, really, grouping plants close together increases the level of water vapour). This visually arresting mix of air plants is a beautiful living exhibit with its graphic leaf shapes, textures and shades.

**How To:** Choose an appropriate surface – be it a windowsill, table or vintage tray – and display a selection of air plants with various leaf shapes and hues. Combine these with rustic, natural and man-made elements, such as wood, stone and glass lab jars and beakers, for an industrial-organic effect.

**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**  
*Tillandsia xerographica*, *Tillandsia argentea*, *Tillandsia ionantha fuego* and Spanish moss; Spanish moss, *Tillandsia lorentziana*, *Tillandsia tricolor*, *Tillandsia 'Houston'*, *Tillandsia neglecta*, *Tillandsia setacea* and *Tillandsia ignesiaie*. **PREVIOUS PAGE** Spanish moss, *Tillandsia lorentziana*, *Tillandsia tricolor*, *Tillandsia 'Houston'*, *Tillandsia neglecta*, *Tillandsia setacea* and *Tillandsia ignesiaie*.

**CENTRE STAGE**

**Idea:** Rethink the centrepiece by displaying plants with oversized proportions and graphic forms. The juxtaposition of the sculptural retro statement table with the unruly, exotic botanical composition raises the dramatic impact to new visual heights.

**How To:** Using a large piece of driftwood as a base, create an installation using exotic species such as a bromeliads or orchids, along with a selection of air plants.

**FROM LEFT TO RIGHT**  
Spanish moss and a selection of *Tillandsia*; an assortment of air plants including Spanish moss, *Tillandsia lorentziana*, *Tillandsia tricolor*, *Tillandsia 'Houston'*, *Tillandsia neglecta*, *Tillandsia setacea*, *Tillandsia ignesiaie* and *Tillandsia abdita*. **NEXT PAGE** An assortment of air plants on driftwood including Spanish moss, *Tillandsia aeranthis*, *Tillandsia fuchsii* and *Tillandsia abdita*.



**LIVING WALL**

**Idea:** Got your eye on that ridiculously expensive botanical-print wallpaper? Create living wallpaper using air plants. You'll not only be beautifying your space, but purifying and detoxing the air.

**How To:** Attach small to medium air plants to the wall using Prestik or washi tape (or small pieces of double-sided tape but note: it may damage the paint if you remove it later). Alternatively, if you don't want to fix the plants to the wall directly, tie the plants – at various heights and intervals – onto an organic piece of driftwood or bamboo, using transparent fishing gut, to make a mobile. Hang it against the wall with hooks, picture nails or a simple curtain rail or copper pipe. Additional air plants can be displayed in contemporary vases or vessels.



### ARTISTIC LICENSE

**Idea:** Look to nature and substitute that painting or print above the fireplace with an organic, textured sculpture that lives and breathes.

**How To:** Affix a variety of air plants to a piece of driftwood using thin craft wire. Hang the driftwood sculpture from a picture hook or nail as you would a framed artwork (use craft wire or transparent fishing gut, depending on the weight of the driftwood).

