

# and decorate with plants

Plants have gained tremendous popularity as decorative elements in apartments, homes and offices. Their use depends on personal taste, budget and an individual's "green thumb" abilities.

There are some excellent books available at the library, and most florists will be happy to advise on amount of light needed for good growth.

Proper light for house plants can be a tricky matter. Many foliage plants cannot tolerate direct sunlight. Their leaves will burn if they get too much. On the other hand, flowering plants, cacti and succulents will not bloom without enough direct sunlight.

If you live in a city apartment where natural light is not plentiful, both fluorescent and special lights are often adequate. Be sure to check first with a local greenhouse.

Before buying, check the five major requirements for a plant—light, water, soil composition, temperature and humidity. Also find out if the plant is tempered or conditioned to a life indoors. If a plant has been living out of doors, the shock of change without a period in a greenhouse will be discouraging as leaves yellow and fall. It will have to be nursed through a period of adjustment.

If you are a beginner, you may wonder how to decorate "taste-

fully" with plants. Although there are no rules as such, plants should look like they "belong" in a particular decor.

For exotic settings, Paradise palms are easy to grow. Time was when these palms were status symbols—perhaps because of their rarity and the fact they could not be shipped from far-off ports successfully.

Today, thanks to modern transportation and improved chemical technology, many varieties of tropical flora are widely available. Palms require relatively little light, they're reasonable, and they grow to dramatic heights that vary from 2½ to six feet.

Boston ferns are beautifully suited to elegant or traditional interiors. Big jardinières of feathery ferns add romantic touches of greenery that "sentimentalize" a room.

Ferns love high humidity and cool temperatures, but should be kept away from drafts and air conditioners, which take moisture out of the air. Curtains or blinds are

a good idea if a fern is in front of a window. Four or five feet back from a sunlit window is best placement.

If you're an Early American buff, grape ivy is a good choice. It's adaptable and can be used in hanging baskets, in centerpieces or on a dry sink, for instance. Grape ivy is medium light requiring, relatively inexpensive, and varies from two inches to three feet in size.

Spanish or Mediterranean decors look more authentic with the luxuriant Corn plant around. Its cost is determined by the variety and the quality, and the size can vary from 10 inches to 15 feet. It requires low to medium light and its water needs are moderate.

One of the newer decorating trends is a revival of Art Deco, and one of the plants that looks appropriate with Deco is *Dffenbachia maculata*—or "Mother-in-law's Tongue." No green thumb is required for this conversation item. Size can vary from four

inches to four feet, and it can be kept alive for years with low light and only an occasional watering.

Modernists like the weeping laurel. It, too, is relatively inexpensive, needs moderate water and average light, and its size varies from one foot table-plant size to the 10 foot floor-plant variety.

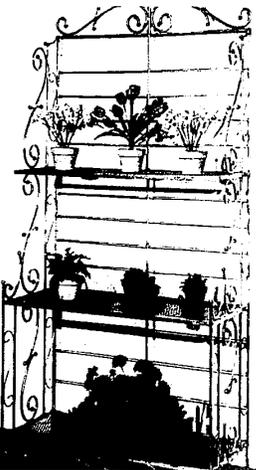
Philodendrons are undoubtedly the most versatile of house plants and seem to suit eclectic backgrounds because of their own flexibility. Except for the exotic varieties, they are fairly inexpensive with minimal light and water needs.

Plants have a lot in common with people: they can be killed with too much food, drink and warmth. Energy conservation will not affect growth of most house plants which like temperatures around 68 degrees. Most plants prosper in temperatures as low as 55 degrees.

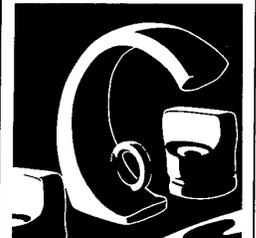
Plants are perhaps the cheapest centerpieces you can use, always "on hand" and "in season."



Mums, whose rich yellows, browns and purples signal the approach of fall, are ideal for bringing color and life to a room—especially when grouped.



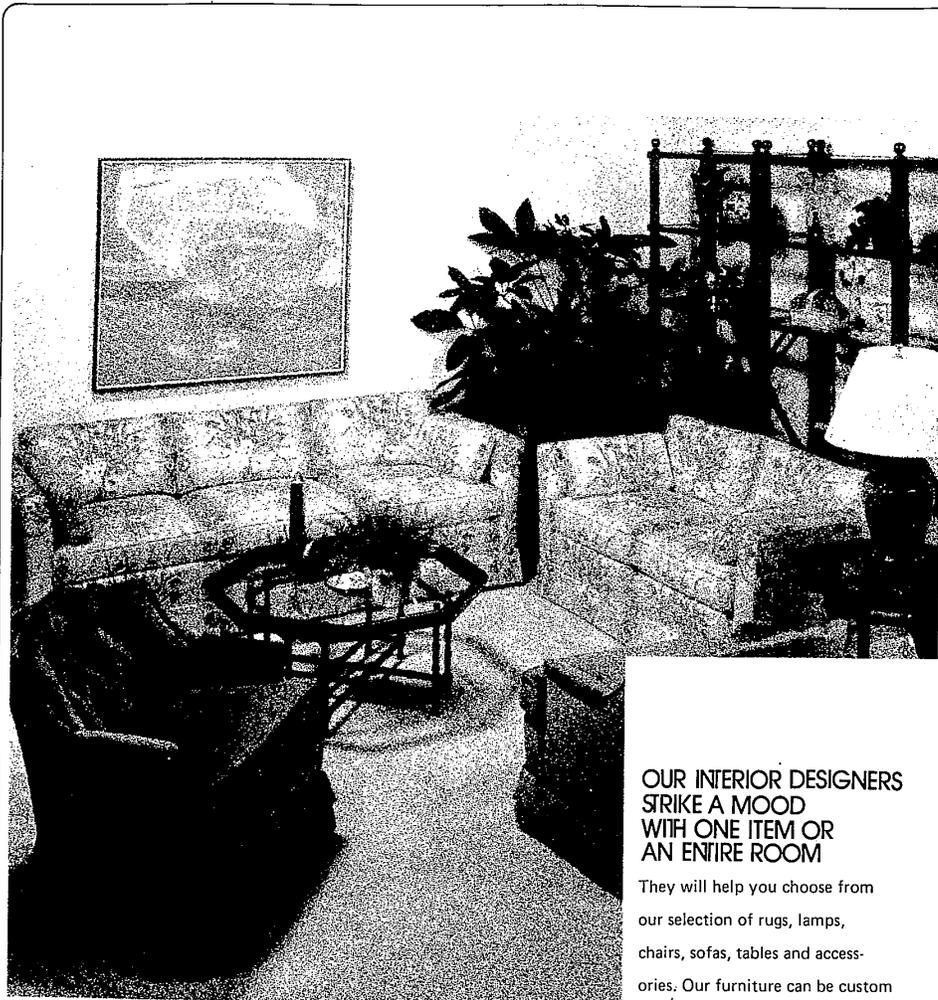
Baker's racks, just like those used to hold French pasteries and sweets, are ideal for housing plants. In a dining room, the rack can double as a handsome, handy serving aid.



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