

HOME & LIVING

# 6 Chic Ways to Use Plants in Your Home Decor - and Why You Should

House plants can improve your health, happiness and home

By Matt Alderton, AARP | [Comments](#)  
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Self-taught horticulturist Larry Pliska believes in the power of plants. He started selling [houseplants](#) from the back of a Volkswagen bus in the early 70s after he lost his corporate job to make a little money and do what he loves most: being around plants.

Pliska, who says he is thriving at 77, founded Planterra, an interior landscape company that designs and implements greenery in residential and commercial spaces, including offices, hotels, hospitals and shopping malls.



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He attributes his [good health](#) to his chlorophyllous colleagues. "For over 30 years, I spent eight hours a day, seven days a week in a greenhouse, and I hardly ever got sick," continues Pliska, who believes so strongly in biophilia — the innate connection humans feel with nature — that he implores everyone, everywhere to bring the outdoors in.

### Green is good for the soul

There's research to back up Pliska's claims, says Vladan Nikolic, a.k.a., "Mr. Houseplant," founder of the houseplant care blog by the same name.

While plants may not clean the air as much as we once thought — a 2019 scientific [review](#) published in the Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology debunked that myth finding that hundreds or thousands of houseplants would be needed to clean the air in a standard room — the mental health benefits are very real.

The International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health published a [review](#) in 2022 of 19 plant-related studies and found significant evidence that plants can lower heart rate, pulse rate and [blood pressure](#) — physiological indicators of reduced stress — while also improving attention, [anxiety](#), and mood. "Even very small-scale greening, including indoor ... potted plants, may provide effective help for stress relief," the study's authors concluded.

"Just looking at nature for 40 seconds relaxes the pre-frontal cortex," the part of the brain that regulates thoughts, actions and emotions, says Jennifer Walsh, co-host of the podcast Biophilic Solutions and founder of Walk with Walsh, which promotes walking in nature. "We evolved around plants, so we feel more comforted when they are present."



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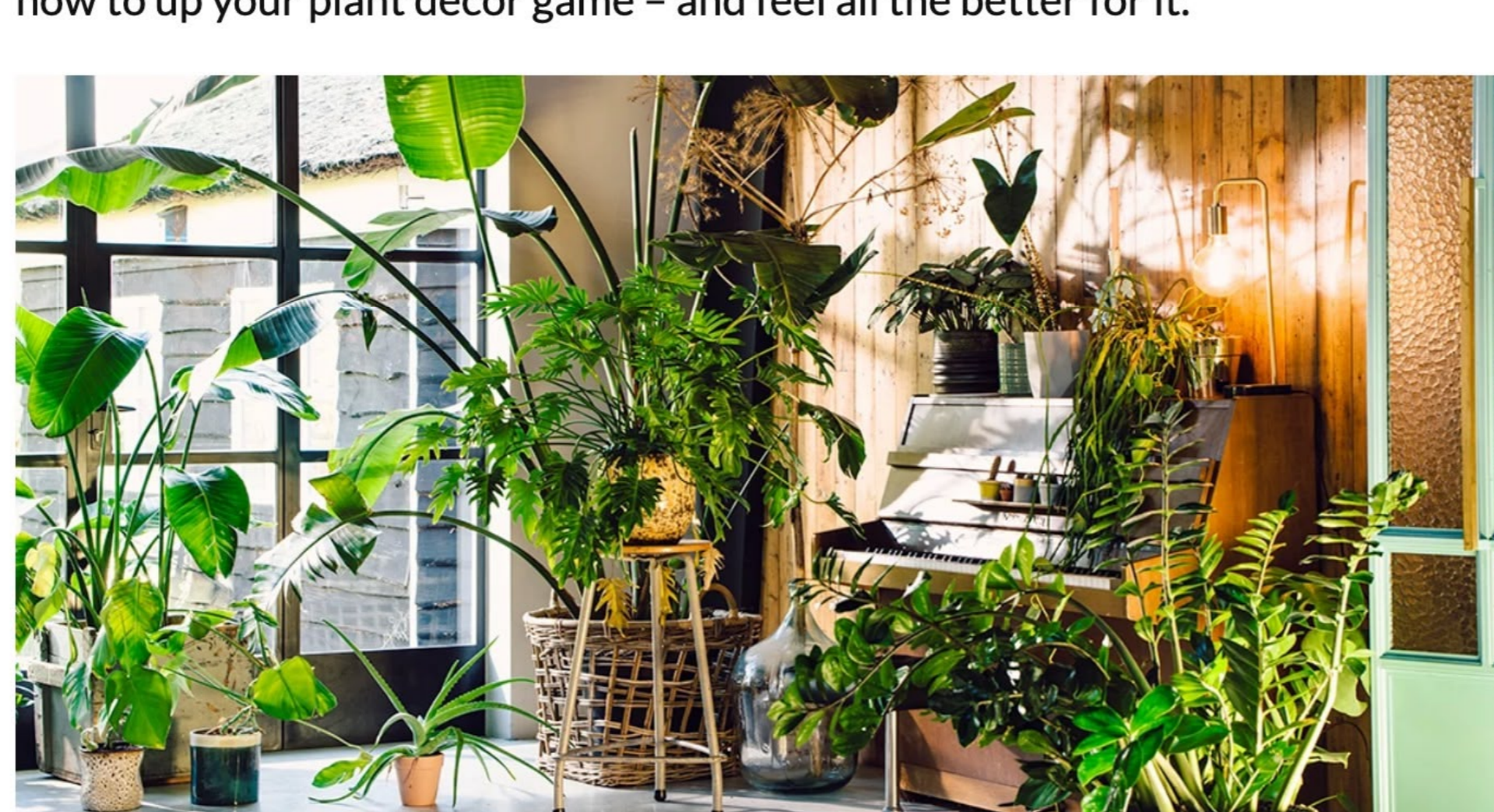
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### Ready to incorporate plants into your décor?

You don't just have to throw a plant by a window or toss a fern on a table. There are other, very cool ways to use plants in your home. Here are expert tips on how to up your plant décor game — and feel all the better for it.



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#### 1. Treat plants as large furnishings

"I love the saying 'go big or go home,' especially when it comes to styling with plants," says plant and interior stylist Hilton Carter, author of five books about biophilic design - including his most recent, *Living Wild: How to Plant Style Your Home & Cultivate Happiness*. "Think of a large plant as a piece of furniture. It can add the perfect touch to a room as a statement piece."

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Statement pieces can be especially effective in vacant corners, suggests certified garden designer Mike Lansing, co-founder and managing editor at Planter's Digest, an online publication for amateur gardeners. "Use a large or tall plant, such as a bird of paradise," he says. "The plant fills the space and softens the edge, giving the impression of a soft corner."

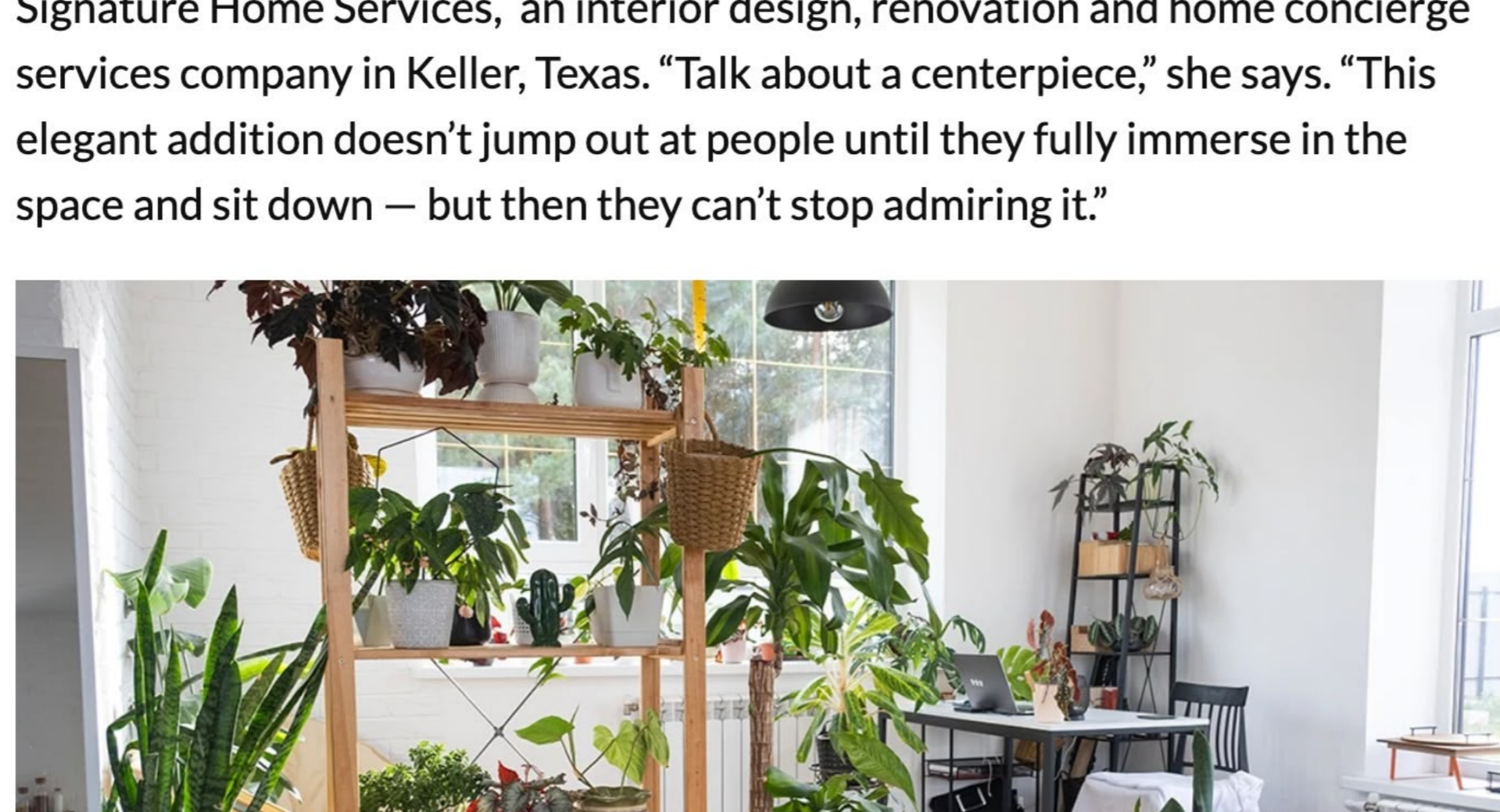


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#### 2. Think outside the pot

Using upcycled containers instead of traditional planters can expand your horizons. "Vintage suitcases, watering cans and even teacups can become charming plant homes," says interior designer Mohammad Ahmed, founder of The Home Guidance, a site dedicated to home design tips and reviews.

Terrariums are another idea. You can even incorporate them into coffee tables, suggests interior designer Robin Burrill, CEO and principal designer at Signature Home Services, an interior design, renovation and home concierge services company in Keller, Texas. "Talk about a centerpiece," she says. "This elegant addition doesn't jump out at people until they fully immerse in the space and sit down — but then they can't stop admiring it."

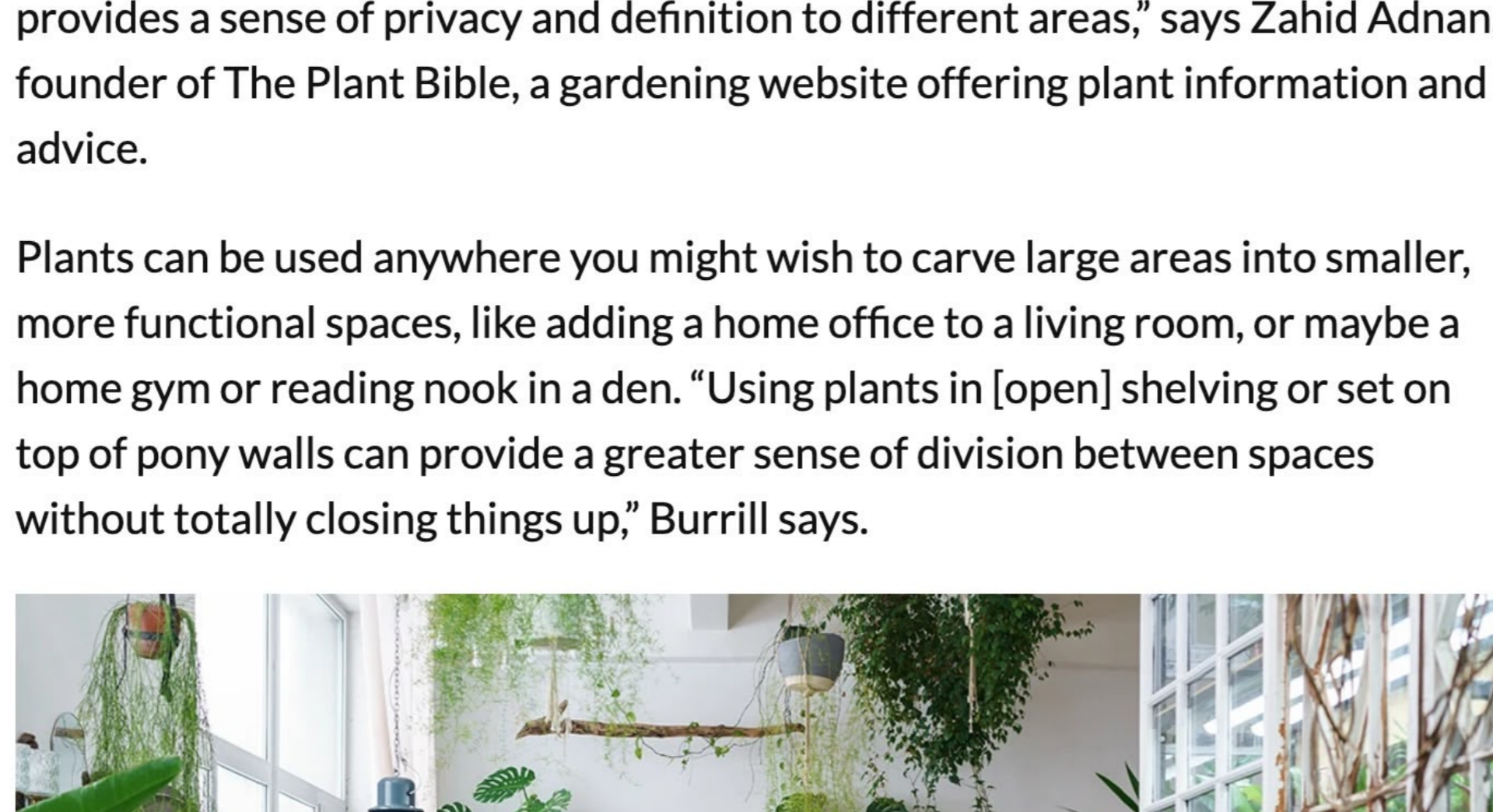


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#### 3. Divide and conquer

Feeling like your open floor plan is a little too open? "Use large, lush plants to delineate spaces within a room. This not only adds a decorative touch, but also provides a sense of privacy and definition to different areas," says Zahid Adnan, founder of The Plant Bible, a gardening website offering plant information and advice.

Plants can be used anywhere you might wish to carve large areas into smaller, more functional spaces, like adding a home office to a living room, or maybe a home gym or reading nook in a den. "Using plants in [open] shelving or set on top of pony walls can provide a greater sense of division between spaces without totally closing things up," Burrill says.



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#### 4. Embrace vertical space

Hanging plants don't have to be just for the outdoors. "Explore the vertical dimension by incorporating hanging planters, wall-mounted shelves or trellises," Adnan says. "This not only saves floor space, but also adds a captivating visual element."

Echoes Ahmed, "Group cascading pothos or philodendrons in macrame hangers for a bohemian vibe. Stagger sleek geometric terrariums with air plants for a modern touch. Or, suspend a mini jungle with a DIY kokedama moss ball chandelier."



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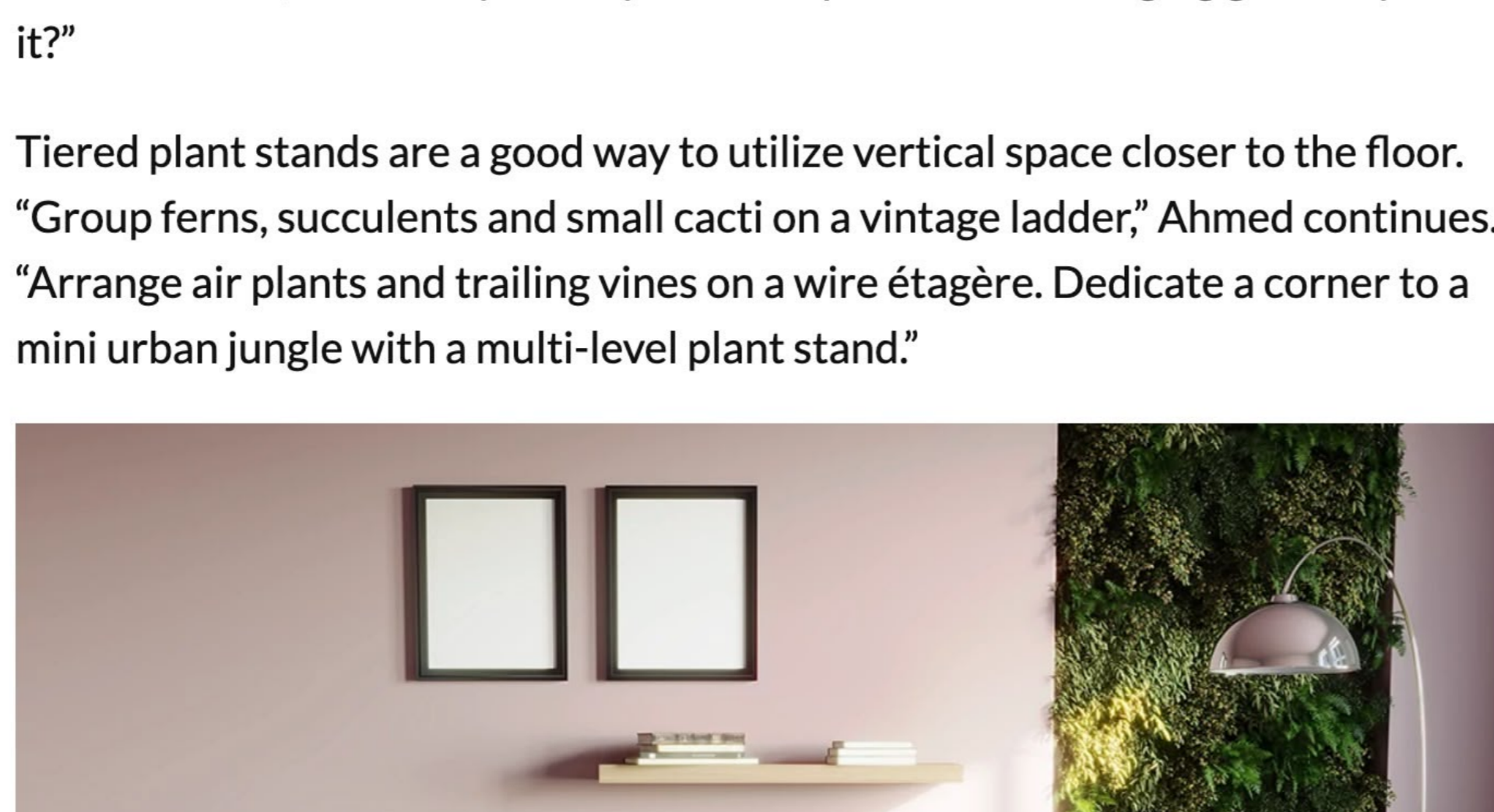
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Speaking of chandeliers: You can create a living light fixture by juxtaposing hanging plants with hanging lights. "My favorite eye candy in many renovations is the hanging lighting — that glittering focal point above the bathtub or the kitchen island," Burrill says. "Why not incorporate some hanging greenery into it?"

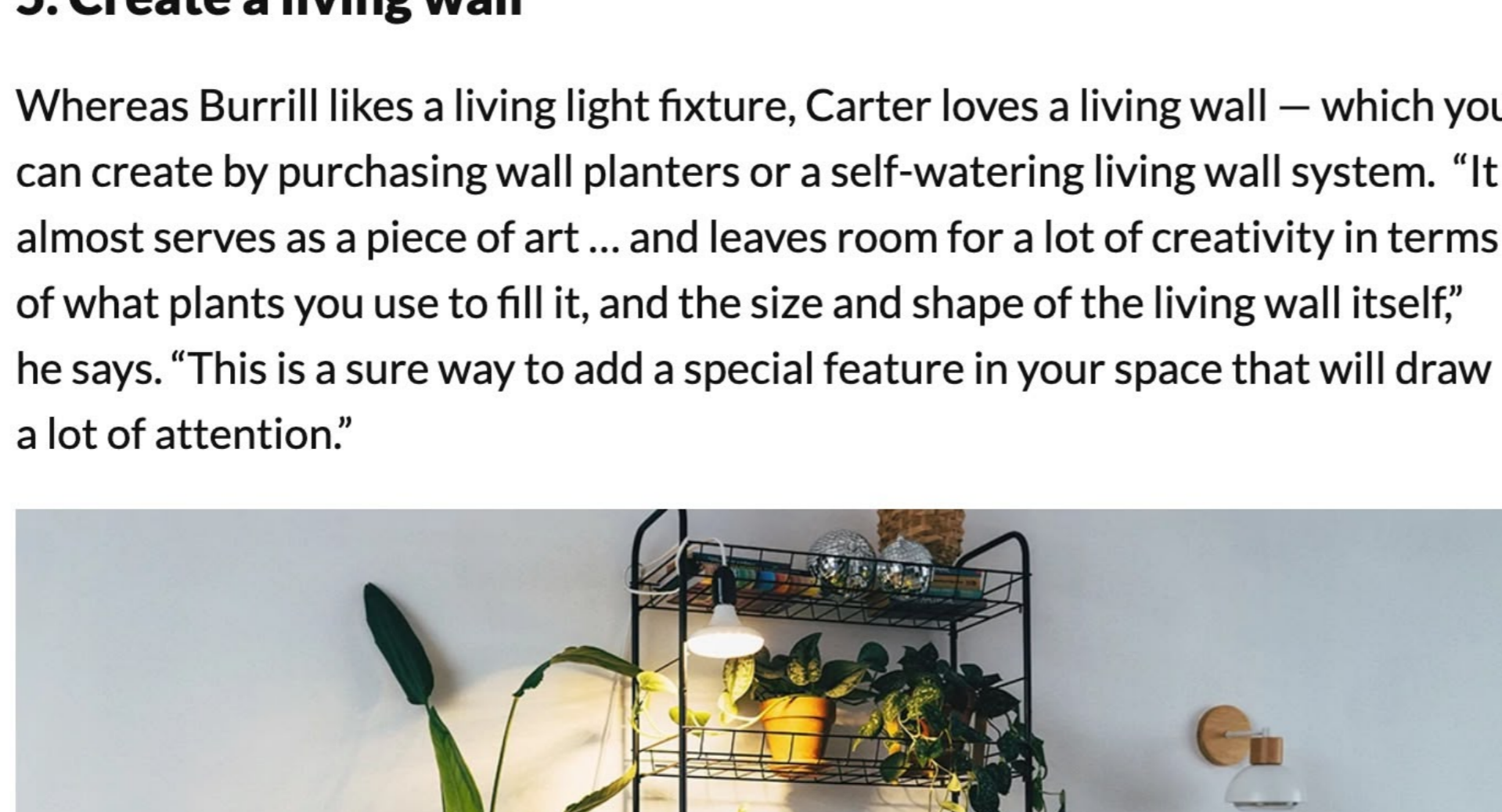
Tiered plant stands are a good way to utilize vertical space closer to the floor. "Group ferns, succulents and small cacti on a vintage ladder," Ahmed continues. "Arrange air plants and trailing vines on a wire étagère. Dedicate a corner to a mini urban jungle with a multi-level plant stand."



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#### 5. Create a living wall

Whereas Burrill likes a living light fixture, Carter loves a living wall — which you can create by purchasing wall planters or a self-watering living wall system. "It almost serves as a piece of art... and leaves room for a lot of creativity in terms of what plants you use to fill it, and the size and shape of the living wall itself," he says. "This is a sure way to add a special feature in your space that will draw a lot of attention."



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#### 6. Let there be light

When it comes to decorating with plants, there's really only one limitation: making sure they get enough light. But even that isn't a deal-breaker because you can light up your plants in creative ways.

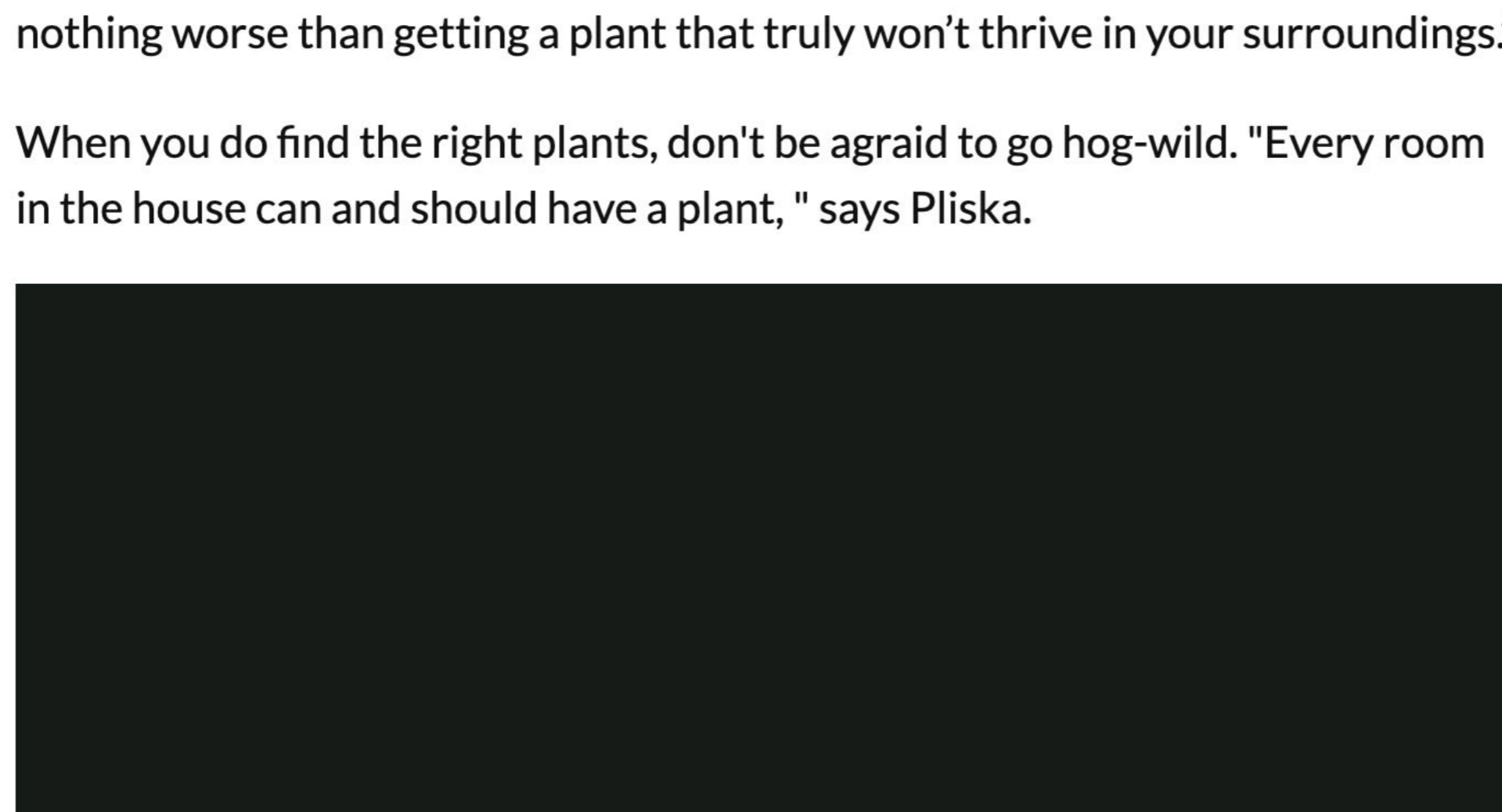
"Plants require light shining from above — like the sun — for photosynthesis," says Pliska, adding that unless you are growing a crop plant (tomato, for example), you can use a full-spectrum white light instead of unattractive pink or purple grow lights.

A spotlight shining down from above is a good method to get your plant the light it needs and can turn it into a showpiece, Ahmed says.

Just be sure to choose your plant specimens wisely: While healthy plants can lift your mood, a 2022 study in the journal Building and Environment found that sick and dead plants might actually sink it.

"Make sure it suits your climate and lifestyle," Walsh says of plantings. "There is nothing worse than getting a plant that truly won't thrive in your surroundings."

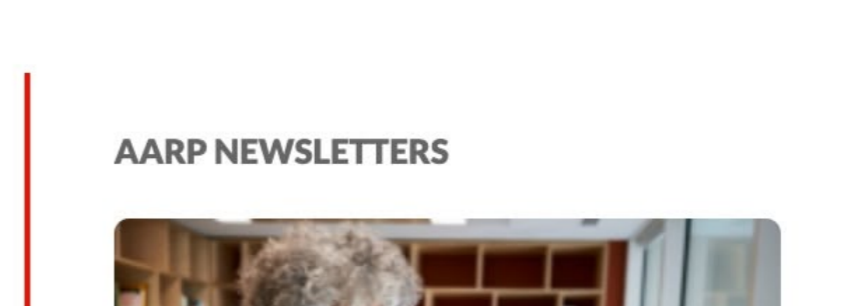
When you do find the right plants, don't be afraid to go hog-wild. "Every room in the house can and should have a plant," says Pliska.



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Video: [How to Grow Herbs at Home](#)

Matt Alderton is a contributing writer who specializes in health and wellness, travel and technology. His work has also appeared in USA Today, Forbes and The Washington Post.



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