

Opinion **Interiors**

## No garden? With even just a window ledge, you can bring the outdoors in

There are a thousand ways to enjoy flowers and foliage all year round, from bulbs to fabrics to artworks and scent

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Tulipiere by Colette Woods in Sean A Pritchard's new book 'Outside In'

### How can I bring a bit of nature indoors for spring — when I don't have a garden?

I love this highly hopeful time of year: the promise of what's to come in our garden is naturally thrilling, but at the time of writing, the inside of our cottage is feeling even more green and abundant. Gardening and being in nature are, as we all know, excellent ways to relieve stress, but you don't need a garden to reap rewards. There are many inventive ways to bring the outside in.

Most recent Wednesday mornings I have spent at our local market, laden with pots of narcissi, hyacinth and muscari bulbs. These I repot in whatever I can find about the house: old china bowls, glass dishes, terracotta pots and metal troughs. I dot them around the house; seeing the bulbs grow and blossom provides endless joy. An idea, perhaps? Dig around the house like me and get inventive with your containers.

If you have available window ledges, you could try growing in pots on these. [Gardenersworld.com](https://www.gardenersworld.com) suggests growing lettuce and radishes in the same pot, for example. A brilliant 2-4-1 deal, I reckon. In just a few weeks from planting plugs (young plants), the lettuce will mature — giving you enough time to grow a filler crop of pink and purple radishes at the edges.

It's a good time of year to be thinking about houseplants. Do some research and see which shapes and colours speak to you. I, for one, have never had a *Sparrmannia Africana* plant, and am thinking that this spring might finally be the time I commit: the *Sparrmannia*'s leaves are large, matt green and quite rough, similar in a way to hollyhock leaves, and I adore hollyhocks.



About Flowers fabric by Dedar

The garden and landscape designer Sean A Pritchard's first book *Outside In* will be published this month. It's a colourful, romantic and very useful tome, which shows how you can display flowers and foliage in your home throughout the year. Pritchard notes that "houseplants always bring nature's magical sense of chaos to any room". Where space is an issue, he suggests using small groups of potted pelargoniums, which "instantly soften a room with their elegantly textural, and often scented, foliage".

Like me, Pritchard fills his house with spring bulbs, creating indoor gardens on windowsills and table tops, which for him act as "great reminders of the landscape that sits sleeping outside".

Beautiful though they may be, they are temporary; so how about bringing some more permanent natural touches into the home by using fabrics, artwork and accessories. I've had my eye on Dedar's [About Flowers](#) fabric for some time. It is inspired by "the bold graphic strokes of modern art". The design features exotic fruits and flowers, printed on a linen and jute mix. I like the version with an off-white background. To me this fabric has a 1930s feeling about it, stylised and chic: I can imagine it made up into a very striking pair of curtains.

I love the idea of art reflecting the outdoors, acting like a window. Look to the artist [Kate Friend](#), who is known for her exquisite botanical portraits. Friend shoots entirely on film and her prints are highly detailed C-types, which are made using a museum-grade printing process.



'Houston, Rosa Sunstruck' by Kate Friend, from a series in which the artist asked notable figures and creatives to pick a plant for her to photograph © Courtesy of Lyndsey Ingram and the artist



'Yinka Ilori, Daisy' by Kate Friend

Ceramics inspired by nature could be something to ponder, too. Take [Freyja Lee](#): her handmade ceramic slipware pieces are made in collaboration with Tilly Young, a Devon-based potter. Lee paints the resulting pieces with swirling motifs inspired by the English landscape, as well as myth and folklore, and her experience of being a mother.

Let's not overlook fragrance. A scented candle might seem like a frivolous purchase to suggest but the power of scent, after all, is magical and mysterious and, at the same time, extremely basic — certain smells can unlock memories and transport us in a second. On my wish list this spring is a scented candle from [Cutter Brooks](#), local to me in Gloucestershire. These candles are hand poured and finished in the Cotswolds and come in three scents: black fig, pear and bergamot, and bay and blackberry.



Scented candles from Cutter Brooks © Mike Garlick

Last but not least: why not consider paper flowers? There are some beautiful versions out there and, although admittedly you can never beat the real thing, the handcrafted paper versions I've come across are pieces of art in their own right. Inspired by the organic world around her, Livia Cetti founded her paper flower studio [The Green Vase](#) in 2005.

All of her paper flowers are handmade by Cetti and her small team in the Bronx, New York, and are meant to be “an impressionistic gesture capturing the spirit of the flower” (a notion I love). No two will be exactly alike. A towering and flowering delphinium in March? A lovely sight.

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