

THECHICHOME



Tapestry of culture and nature

Designer's home is filled with furniture and art that reflect her personality

Home & Decor

Ms Nidhi Jain and her husband have called Singapore home for 15 years.

The couple, who are in their 40s, have two daughters, aged 11 and six.

Public spaces in natural surroundings such as East Coast Park and the Singapore Botanic Gardens were sources of inspiration for Ms Jain, founder and principal designer of interior design firm Nidhi Jain Associates, when planning the house. Her husband is a wealth manager at a French bank.

She wanted her house to have a connection to nature, but the outdoor areas in the semi-detached property in Limau Garden – which has 2,800 sq ft of land area and 3,600 sq ft of built-up floor area – were devoid of greenery.

“I introduced layers of tropical foliage, sculptural trees, a herb garden and meandering pebble pathways to create a sense of discovery,” she says.

Next to the lawn and a tropical planter-lined boundary wall, the entrance porch is surrounded by greenery that gives it a sense of seclusion and tranquillity.

The double-volume living room has a palatial air, but feels welcoming, thanks to plush armchairs, soft furnishings and an oversized rug by Nasser Nishaburi.

The space has a view of the peripheral greenery along the boundary wall, framed by 5cm, light wood borders around aluminium doors.

Opposite this is a rustic stone wall that extends the full two-storey height of the living room. Positioned in front of this wall is an intricately carved antique wooden console with a Penta Glo table lamp with a handblown glass sphere.

A few steps up from the living room, the dining area features a piece by artist Ketna Patel. An archway beside the dining room leads to a large kitchen with an island.

On the other side of the partition wall is the former backyard, which is now the family's second entertaining zone with an outdoor kitchen and a bar for her husband to make cocktails.

The second storey comprises a mid-landing area overlooking the living room. This space is a family lounge complete with a piano, books and an entertainment corner.

On the third storey, the existing partitions in the master bedroom were removed to create a more open layout. Ms Jain wanted a large wardrobe, but found the room's size and layout could not accommodate a walk-in closet.

She combined function and art by turning the wardrobe doors in-



(Far left) This lavish semi-detached house, home to a family of four, is full of personality. PHOTOS: SPH MEDIA

(Left) The double-volume living room has a palatial air softened by well-chosen furnishings.



(Above) The old partitions in the master bedroom were removed to create a more open layout.

(Left) The girls' bedroom is feminine without being overly cute.

(Above right) The foyer has black-and-white checkered flooring.



to a mural. “I managed to carve out a 7.5m-long wardrobe with sections for shoes, bags, belts and ties, along with a separate vanity area.”

For the girls' bedroom, the existing bulky cabinets were replaced with a study alcove and bookshelves. Light pink walls, a pink chandelier, and a pair of rattan and wood bedframes give

the room feminine vibes without being overly cute.

The renovation took six months, comprising two months of preparation and planning, followed by four months of on-site work. The family moved into their new home in August 2024.

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Aroids: Plants that grow on things

Wilson Wong

In July's Plant Parenting column, we learnt about orchids and other epiphytic plants, which grow on the surfaces of plants or objects. This month, explore hemi-epiphyte plants, which spend part of their lives rooted in the ground.

They can be classified into primary or secondary hemi-epiphytes.

Aroids are members of the Arum family (Araceae) and many species are secondary hemi-epiphytes. They start out growing in the ground and, later in life, grow as epiphytes on trees.

Plants from the genera Philodendron, Monstera, Epipremnum, Rhipidophora, Syngonium and Anthurium, with their distinctive foliage, are popular aroids often grown in high-rise and outdoor gardens.

In retail nurseries, hemi-epiphytic aroids sold as potted plants appear as an



Philodendron billietiae, an eye-catching aroid with attractive orange leaf stalks, climbing up a palm in the Singapore Botanic Gardens. PHOTOS: WILSON WONG

attractive cluster of leaves. With time, plants adopt a vining habit. Those with thinner stems develop a trailing habit with cascading stems.

In many species with such a growth habit, leaves become smaller with time. Plants may also produce leafless stems.

A closer look at the stems of hemi-epiphytic aroids will reveal small, stubby nodes along the stem. Roots are produced from each node and take up nutrients and water.

In natural surroundings, the roots will first grow into the moist, aerated leaf litter layer on the forest floor until the stem finds a tree to grow on. They then grow upwards along the tree trunk as the plant climbs towards a light source. In very humid environments, you can sometimes see long aerial roots growing from the stems of climbing plants.

Depending on the species, tree bark can have a porous structure that retains some moisture. This allows the roots of hemi-epiphytic

aroids to grow into the bark, so the plant can anchor itself to its host.

For some aroid species, their leaf shape will increase in size as they grow. In the plant's adult stage, leaves develop holes or perforations via a process called fenestration. This is thought to improve air flow, reducing wind resistance and damage to plants growing high above the canopy of trees.

High-rise gardeners who grow aroids in containers typically

provide a vertical pole for their plants to climb. The traditional version is the coconut coir pole, which consists of coconut husk fibres wrapped around a plastic pipe. These poles are available in various fixed lengths at nurseries.

A gardener can also build his or her own climbing pole by using wire mesh that is rolled into a cylinder and stuffed with organic material, such as coconut husk fibre or sphagnum moss. Newer pole designs, which can be found for sale online, take the form of short perforated plastic cylinders that can be connected to lengthen the support as the plant grows.

The disadvantage of using an organic material is that it will break down over time. Some gardeners overcome this limitation by wrapping a plastic pipe with geotextile cloth (a non-biodegradable material) or a dense plastic shade net to make the pole more durable.

The pole also needs to be weighed down or secured to the base of the pot. As the plant grows, it will get “top-heavy” and can topple over. Both the pole and pot should be made of durable materials.

To encourage your aroids to climb, place the stem of the plant near the support and tie it to the pole. For roots to grow into the support, you need to keep the material moist via regular misting.

As the plant grows, its stem will thicken. Cut any twine that was used to bind the stem to the

support, doing so carefully to avoid injuring the plant.

In gardens where sunlight comes from only one direction, avoid rotating the pot once your plant has started climbing. This will preserve the orderly arrangement of the leaves as

the plant grows.

For those with outdoor gardens, hemi-epiphytic aroids can be trained to climb onto a wall, tree or palm. However, this can make inspection of that surface difficult, as the plant's leaves and stems will obstruct one's view.

This approach to growing hemi-epiphytic aroids can be adapted for non-aroids with a similar growth habit. Examples include Dragonfruit (Selenicereus), Pepper plant (Piper nigrum) and Climbing Fig (Ficus pumila).

• Plant Parenting is a series about houseplant care and other gardening essentials. Have a gardening topic you are interested in? Write in to stlife@sph.com.sg. We reserve the right to edit and reject questions.

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