

OCTOBER 20, 2007

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Good **Weekend**

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How to study nature

Take a leaf out of Mother Nature's book this season, with colours that echo a desert landscape, a blossoming branch or a sun-kissed sea.

Mother Nature is a bottomless resource for designers of all kinds. There have been buildings inspired by the shape of a leaf; house paints mimicking the colour of the head of a wave; and countless room schemes based around the rich colour palette of the desert.

This season designers have taken inspiration from the natural world with gusto. Never have I seen so many beautiful botanical references in wallpaper, fabric, lampshades, soft furnishings and tabletop accessories. Gaia's imprint is everywhere (see Choices, right) in both shapes as well as materials like water hyacinth, birch twigs, bamboo and linen. Perfect timing, too, I say – let's hope they serve as a constant reminder of what we have to lose by not caring for the world around us.

What I love the most about studying nature is the incredible (not to mention free) advice it gives for paint schemes. Whether you are after that elusive neutral grey shell shade (try Murobond's "Crushed Shell" – it is exactly that) or a shimmering silver grey similar to a trunk of a birch tree (try Porters' "Elegance") or the colour of a storm cloud (Resene's "Warlord"), any colour scheme derived from nature is usually spot-on.

I have seen a cheery kitchen scheme based around the colours witnessed at an open air fruit and veg market. I have styled a bathroom that took the incredible subtleties of a pebble as its muse. In a master bedroom that managed the tricky task of using softer hues in a unisex space, the owner took her cue from the super-soft colours of sea foam – a bit of grey, green and whitewashed blue.

My favourite way of spotting a winning combination is to look through my florist's window – there are literally hundreds of micro colour combinations at work in every corner. Who knew that a stick of magnolia could hold the secret to painting a sitting room? **GW**





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Stockists

- 1.** "Seed Pod" bolster (1m long), \$520, from Shweshwe, (03) 8415 1666; www.shweshwe.com.
- 2.** Bamboo bowl-tray, \$50, from Kifkaf, (02) 9516 5556; www.kifkaf.com.au.
- 3.** "Malibu" chair, \$275, from Beachwood, (02) 9918 7162; www.beachwood.com.au.
- 4.** Danese Milano perpetual calendar, \$152, from Artemide, (03) 9349 3310; www.artemide.com.
- 5.** Square patch cushions, \$130 each (mid-size), \$105 (small), from Cloth, (02) 9699 2266; www.clothfabric.com.
- 6.** Barrel baskets, from \$30, from Kifkaf, as before.
- 7.** Mid-size tube lamp with wooden base in "Banksia" (left) and "Kangaroo Paw" fabric, \$320 each, from Cloth, as before.
- 8.** "Pinch" timber branch peg by Jos van der Meulen for Goods, \$75, from Dedece, (03) 9650 9600 or (02) 9360 2722; www.dedece.com.