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Ayurveda by Design

The principles of this ancient healing science can be applied to create a healthier home

By Tracy Kaler



The types of plants you should choose for your home depend on your "dosha" or energy.

Translating to "knowledge of life," ayurveda is an ancient healing science that began in India at least 5,000 years ago. The holistic practice most often focuses on wellness, but ayurvedic principles can also inspire lifestyle choices and even design decisions, such as the layout, colors, furnishings, and overall aesthetic of interiors.

The key is creating "a comfortable and ayurvedically balanced space at home," says Alex C. Wilson, a certified yoga instructor, ayurveda expert, and wellness coach based in Fort Myers, Florida.

"How you choose to apply the principles of ayurveda will depend largely on your primary dosha or doshas," Ms. Wilson says. And identifying one's "dosha"—the energy, or mind and body type of a person—is essential. Determining and balancing one's dosha is thought to be the key to health and longevity.

Each of the three doshas has origins in the five elements of nature: space, fire, water, air, or earth. Vata dosha is comprised of air and space; Pitta is a combo of fire and water; and Kapha dosha consists of water and earth.

Knowing your blend of these three body types is, in essence, how you can feel most calm and content. In the home, for instance, Vata doshas may benefit from warmer colors and materials, as well as comfy furnishings (nothing stiff, so avoid leather), inside a warm, intimate space without too much openness or moving air.

Ms. Wilson explains that Pitta doshas,



however, fare better with cooler tones and textiles, and an overall lower temperature in the home. Also, Pittas may not do well with too much bright light. Meanwhile, a well-ventilated home with vibrant hues and firm furnishings will work well for a Kapha. If upholstery and wall colors are in neutral tones, Kapha doshas can integrate splashes of bold color through artwork and accessories.

The Importance of Decluttering

Clutter could be considered an enemy of any dosha. Most rooms can stand a good edit—or even a purge—to keep excess belongings to a minimum. Laura Coburn, certified ayurveda health counselor and director of serenity at *lins of Aurora*, based in the Syracuse, New York, area, explains that all doshas can benefit from the calm that naturally occurs from an orderly and clutter-free environment.

“Kapha has a tendency toward accumulation,” she says. “This dosha would do well to

regularly edit what they have.” Organization works for both Pitta and Vata doshas.

Bring the Outside In, and Change With the Seasons

Bringing the outside in can have a positive effect on all doshas. “The body, mind, and spirit benefit from time in nature, so bringing more greenery into your living space will enhance wellness,” Ms. Coburn says. Moderation, though, is key. Kaphas should choose plants with color rather than all greenery, which may suggest too much earth and water, or damp, earthy aromas.

Ayurvedic principles should be kept in mind as seasons shift. New York-based interior designer Ashley Dentino curates design guides based on the teachings of ayurveda. She explains that routines and homes should ebb and flow with the time of year.

“Spring is characterized by warmth, moisture, and a palpable softness,” Ms. Dentino



Decluttering is key for ayurvedic design, while color palettes will depend on your “dosha.”

FIND YOUR DOSHA



says. She suggests bringing in “bright, warming colors like reds, yellows, and oranges in early spring, while the weather is cool and wet. As the weather heats up, gradually shift toward cooling blues, greens, purples, and whites.”

Likewise, with summer’s heat, long sunny days, and increased activity, we should introduce coolness, lightness, relaxation, and breathable materials such as cotton, linen, and silk. “To harmonize ourselves and our lives, we create balance with opposing qualities,” Ms. Dentino says.

If you want to incorporate ayurvedic concepts in your home but don’t know where to begin, work with a designer or architect specializing in organic interiors and biophilic design—a concept that connects the end user to the natural environment.

“To integrate ayurvedic principles into your home, the designer must go beyond conventional training to gain a thorough understanding of ayurveda, [as well as] color theory, environmental psychology, and biophilic design,” says Veronica Schreiber Smith, founding principal of Vera Iconica Architecture in Jackson, Wyoming, and a pioneer in wellness architecture. A designer should have a well-rounded perspective and know “how to balance space, fire, water, air, and earth in the home,” she says. Ms. Schreiber Smith believes the interior environment will likely affect wellness almost as much as what you put into your body.