

Publication: Kansas City Star; Date: Aug 30, 2009; Section: Star Magazine; Page Number: M-6

GREENERY WITHOUT THE GRIEF

Tired of killing every plant that comes into your home? Try some no-fuss foliage.

For years, I avoided indoor plants and arrangements. Maybe it was bad memories from growing up of macramé plant hangers holding spider plants growing down to the floor, across tables and counters; the philodendrons growing across upper kitchen cabinets or consuming office cubicles.

Add to that the sad fact that I couldn't keep an indoor plant alive. And I'm too modern to contemplate mauve silk flowers or huge dried arrangements. So recently I turned to Becky Ederer of Beco Flowers in the Crossroads for help overcoming my fear of houseplants. She is a master of simple, modern-looking indoor plantings and arrangements.

For my brown thumb, easy care is key. Becky steered me in the right direction with several low-maintenance options:

■ **Sansevieria**, or snake plant, comes in new varieties, with black and gold accents, not just the dusty gray-green colors most of us are familiar with.

■ **ZZ plant** (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*) is virtually indestructible in a wide range of lighting situations, from very low light to bright indirect light.

■ **Pencil cactus** is very architectural looking and easy as long as it gets some sun, some fertilizer in summer and well-draining soil.

■ **New-generation philodendrons** such as "Caramel Cream," "Malay Gold" and "Zulu Prince" come in unexpected colors such as burgundy, gold and chartreuse and are just as easy to care for as the old ones. As a bonus, the new ones are less leggy.

Live arrangements do not need to be just flowers and plants. A dried branch can be used to fill in. Becky also is



known to mix live plants with an accent or two of artificial plants. She can create an arrangement of branches, succulents and rocks, then leave spots for live plants or cut flowers to be slipped in and out as needed.

Covering the potting soil is a nice finishing touch. Fresh green sheet moss always looks beautiful, but I usually end up killing it, because it needs plenty of water. Rocks provide a low-maintenance covering. Beach glass, marbles or seashells also can be used.

Our windowsills in the summer are bare, clearing the view to the greenery, flowers and urban wildlife outside.

In the winter, many of our pots land inside on the sill, adding green and life to a winter view. For cohesiveness, the pots are similar in style or color, as are the plants. Our pots are a combination of antique McCoy pottery and new pots glazed in similar colors. The plants are mainly succulents in a variety of shapes and sizes; tall and spiky, round and prickly, short and leafy. They are not scattered throughout the house but clustered in one area, providing more visual impact.

Smaller pots are placed together on watertight trays to protect the surface, which also helps anchor the grouping.

Sometimes, we just need a simple touch of nature, but not something as formal as an arrangement. A perfect, huge glossy green monstera leaf is longer lasting and a great go-to choice for a graphic, modern touch. A dried branch placed on the counter or a clump of dried wheat also makes a nice, simple focal point.

Reach Lisa Schmitz, owner of Lisa Schmitz Interior Design in Kansas City, at lisaschmitz@kc.rr.com.



ROY INMAN | SPECIAL TO THE STAR

This window box planter, part of an El Dorado Architects project, is lined in the countertop material, Fireslate, and includes a drain.