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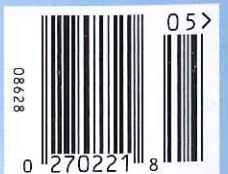
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BRING THAT SPA FEELING HOME

Nothing ages you like stress, and nothing relaxes you like a spa. Set one foot inside and scrunched shoulders drop; worry lines soften. It's not just the anticipation of a massage or sauna that calms you; everything from the flowers in the entryway to the scented soap in the bathroom is working subtle magic. If your home triggers more "argh!" than "aah" right now, grab an idea or two from spa designers who know how to bring the bliss.

by KATE ROCKWOOD

[NATURE]

DISCOVER THE POWER OF FRACTALS

Get Inspired

Flowers, crystals, seashells, succulents—they're all common design elements in spas, and with good reason. They contain fractals, natural patterns that repeat at different sizes and scales. Even if your conscious mind doesn't notice them, your brain does—and they can help you relax. "Fractal patterns are prevalent in nature, and your body is hardwired to be drawn to them and process them very easily," says Richard Taylor, Ph.D., director of the Materials Science Institute at the University of Oregon. "They put you in your visual comfort zone, and your whole physiology changes." Research in the journal *Perception* shows that gazing at fractals increases the brain's alpha wave activity, associated with relaxation. Other research found that when people took a break from a tough task and looked at fractal images, their stress levels were 66% lower than those who looked at a control image.

More than just a beach souvenir; shells can also be brain soothing.



Natural scenes in photos and art can also impart fractal calm. Look for trees, waterfalls, mountain ranges, clouds, or gentle shorelines.

Bring It Home Make room for some potted succulents on a coffee table or in a fireplace, set up a dedicated flower vase by a window, or give space to that seashell collection from your family's summer v̄acay. "Some of nature's repetitions are subtle, and you might not notice them right away," says Taylor, "but your brain detects them automatically."



Start winding down at your door. Contain any clutter and let this space breathe.

[ORGANIZATION]
MAKE A GREAT ENTRANCE

Get Inspired Spa entryway: rock gardens, serene fountains, and pretty sculptures. Your entryway: an avalanche of mail and kicked-off shoes ready to trip you—nice! No wonder the two evoke totally different emotions. “An entryway sets the tone for what’s to come,” says Gray Davis, cofounder of the design firm Meyer Davis, the creative force behind high-end spas for such brands as the Four Seasons. “You want a little space to help people decompress.” At Chuan Body + Soul, a spa in New York that is based on Chinese medicine principles, the designers installed a traditional moon gate in the entry, along with a candlelit hall that leads to the reception desk.

Bring It Home “Creating a sense of passage can have a big impact as you arrive home,” Davis says. Instead of facing a visual reminder of your to-do list (sort the mail! pay the bills! walk the dog!), imagine opening your door and seeing a vase of flowers, framed artwork by your kids, and mail neatly corralled in a basket. (And relocate shoes to a rack in your mudroom; your efforts will be repaid in serenity points.)

[COLOR]
CHANNEL MOTHER NATURE

Get Inspired An all-white room can feel too clinical to be calming, but vibrant hues can over-stimulate. So how do spas get the energy just right? By using blues and greens, says Leatrice Eiseman, an international color specialist and the author of *Colors for Your Every Mood*. “Cooler colors promote tranquility, because blue is connected to sky and water, and green to nature,” she says. Research indicates that a blue environment might be calming when tasks are more challenging. At the spa at Sunset Marquis in West Hollywood, interior designer Oliva Villaluz settled on an aquamarine hue before anything else. “To make the spa feel like an oasis, I wanted to use the color of water,” she says. “So I chose glass tiles in different shades of blue; not just an accent here or there, but entire walls of color.”



So many sea tones... Play with colors to find your fave trio.

Bring It Home Not ready to repaint your living room? Instead, step back and look at the space you’re trying to inject with tranquility. Are your throw pillows more zany than Zen? Move the brightly patterned ones to another room. Did white and gray everywhere seem like a great idea during your minimalist phase, but now they remind you of an airport terminal? Add a soft blue rug or seafoam blanket to cozy up the space. To help keep a room interesting, pick three colors and make one more dominant, says Eiseman. “Cooler colors help set a tranquil mood.” →