



Cloud Forest Dome at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore



# Going green

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT TONY MILNE MUSES ON OUR PREDILECTION FOR GREENING IN OUR INTERIOR SPACES.



**TONY MILNE**  
Rough & Milne  
Landscape  
Architects

Historically we have associated surrounding ourselves with palms and other botanical specimens from exotic destinations in our indoors spaces with luxury, rest and relaxation. Be it Victorian glasshouses in our public parks, or domestic conservatories and sunrooms. I am sure the pointed leaves of a mother-in-law's tongue will resonate for many.

Over recent years, these indoor plants have become very much on-trend, with a huge number of hospitality, commercial and retail establishments lined with pots and prints of palms, fruit salad plants, birds of paradise and living green walls.

This brings back fond memories of my time spent teaching into Lincoln University's landscape architecture programme in Singapore. I recall the wonderful integration of plants and built form within this humid city. My senses piqued once again when we recently spent some time visiting the Flower Dome and

the Cloud Forest at the wonderful Gardens by the Bay.

The latter is a mist-filled 8,000m<sup>2</sup> conservatory filled with orchids, ferns, vines, mosses, bromeliads and many more species from the moist tropical montane regions of our world. The centrepiece of the dome is the world's tallest indoor waterfall with which you can engage as you traverse the suspended walkways. This certainly challenges the original concept of the Victorian glasshouse.

A number of years ago we thought a living green wall would be the perfect lift for our studio. I'd seen a number of green walls – the one in 'The Gauge', a building in Melbourne with a 6 Star Green Star Office rating, was most memorable with its bold display of epiphytes, lithophytes and hemi-epiphytes growing from mostly expanded foam packaging waste originally destined for landfill. It is hard to resist a beautiful walking iris, the aptly named lipstick plant or even the flamingo flower.

Of course, our desire was to pack our internal green wall with fern, moss and groundcover species native to Aotearoa. However, our dream was derailed once we delved into the cost! Undeterred, we reconsidered our options, and floating above our studio space we now have 21 white pots spilling over with *Syngonium podophyllum*.

Unlike a lot of potted plants I try to

keep alive, the *Syngonium* has thrived despite my lack of attention. Luckily, others within our office make sure the pot mix is kept moist. The green leaves tumble down and the trailing vines entwine to provide us with an ethereal green ceiling that only drops water on the odd occasion.

Every other new building design I see starts off with an internal green wall until the sickle of value engineering cuts a swathe through the project budget. But is it just a fad that will be surpassed by the next 'in thing', or could this inside greening be here to stay – when budgets allow?

Without an in-depth analysis of the benefits of the potted *Syngonium* in our studio, I happily defer to current research that shows that there are a good many things indoor plants contribute to our lives.

Our lives are becoming busier, immersed in technology, and our cities increasingly intensified. Perhaps our biophilic orientation (an ingrained desire to immerse ourselves in nature and bring more of the landscape indoors) is an attempt to 'disconnect' and reconnect with nature to improve our wellbeing.

03 366 3268 | [roughandmilne.co.nz](http://roughandmilne.co.nz)