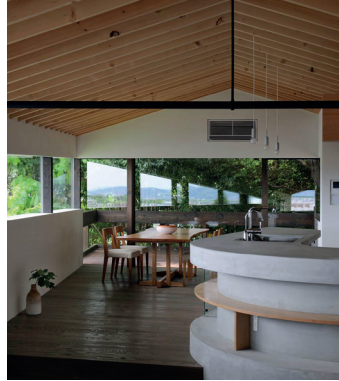
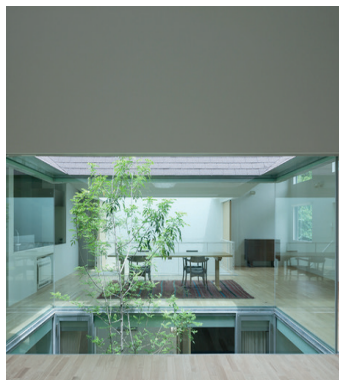




ZenVita Original Japanese Home Designs



10 Ways to Create Your Own Zen House



Search magazines and websites dedicated to modern decor, and pictures of Japanese style interiors are easily found. Whether it be a small pot, a Zen garden or a modern reworking of a traditional Japanese room, architects and decorators turn to the east for inspiration.

Behind these simple interior designs lies a very particular and distinct way of life. Zen philosophy and its teachings are studied and incorporated widely in modern Japanese architecture, enriching our understanding of what good design is all about.

That being said, it is easily understood that Japanese design is not a trend.

It will never be out of fashion, and it will never get old, because it forms part of a particular approach of life, a simpler one, without pretense, riches and unnecessary stylistic exaggerations. Above all it reflects the long history of Japan, and the evolution of its philosophy and architecture. The moment you decide to add Japanese style to your house, you have chosen an aesthetic principle. It is not about what kind of painting you will put on the walls anymore, but rather it goes deeper, into what kind of life you want to live.

So how can we add a truly Japanese touch to our home?

The first step is knowledge, and with this we can help you. Adding a little Japanese style can be easy and inexpensive with the right know-how, style tips and advice. If you are thinking of designing a Japanese style home, then these are our ten top recommendations.



1

Creating a memorable entrance

The entrance, or *genkan*, plays an important role in creating a good first impression of the house.

[Click the image to learn more](#)

A door that opens up directly onto a living room may be quite common to a Western eye, but it is unusual for the Japanese. Instead, from the moment you open the door and step inside there is a sequence of transitions. First there is the entry hall where you remove your shoes, and then there is a passageway which in turn leads to the interior. This movement from the dimly lit entrance to the darker corridor, and then to the brightly lit living room, creates a sensation of leaving one world to enter another. Usually there is a change of material (traditionally from stone or earthen floor to wood), and that is accompanied by a slight change in height between the entry hall and the main rooms.

The simple action of removing our shoes at the entrance makes us feel more profoundly our movement from the outside world with all its worries and anxieties, to the safe, pure inside, the home as sanctuary.

When designing your entryway, play with light and shadows. If you need to store things at the entrance use built-in drawers that can hide their contents. Your entryway should be simple but welcoming, and relate to the rest of the house, so that with one look at the entry hall your guests feel predisposed to the rest of your interior. And do not forget the basics: keep it clean and minimal.

2 Focusing your decoration at one spot

So you thought ahead and bought Japanese pots, sculptures and scrolls.

Have you thought where you will place them? Will you start filling every empty spot in the house or adorn every horizontal surface you have with them just for the sake of a Zen touch?

Well, instead of having random elements dispersed throughout the house it is advisable to focus attention on one spot for a decorative hub. Known to Japanese as the *tokonoma* this one spot has no practical use except to serve as the main decorative spot in the house. Traditionally it is where owners can share with guests their personal appreciation for beautiful things. Even if you aren't aiming for a full Japanese style, try to have one wall, or a small area, as the main focal point of your living room. When you find that place in your house, then you can decide what kind of elements are best fit to adorn it.

Common Japanese style decorations are paper scrolls, flower arrangements, bonsai trees or pottery. Keep it minimal, avoid symmetry and change the decoration through the seasons for more variety.



3

Keep it simple in the bedroom

There is no better place to create a Zen space than the bedroom.



A room devoted to rest and contemplation, this is your place to go all minimal. Think what are the most indispensable elements for your place of repose. We all know that clutter can accumulate easily. Limit unnecessary furniture to the minimum. The more you have, the more difficult it becomes to clean anyway. Above all remember that the essence of Japanese style is simplicity. Simplicity in the design, in the decorations and in your everyday movements.

Choose Japanese-influenced artwork that relaxes you and balance it with the rest of the furniture. Use shoji screens with straight lines to give the room a sense of order and then play with that order by positioning the furniture in an asymmetrical manner. The bedroom is the place you rest, where you want to take a deep sleep to rejuvenate yourself, so avoid any distracting elements like a TV or computer that can divert your attention from the room's true purpose.



4

Convert your bathroom into a private spa

Taking a bath and relaxing after a hard day's work is the highlight of your day, so it is essential to get this room right.

It is not just about getting yourself clean. It is about enjoying a moment of peace and harmony with yourself and with nature. Soak in the waters, close your eyes, and you feel as if you have escaped to nirvana...

Of course, you need one or two basic things to help you get into the mood. A window looking on to a small private garden, would be the best option, but if that's not possible, you can create a similar closeness to nature with appropriate materials, colors, scent and sounds. Use hidden or indirect lighting instead of intense direct illumination to get a natural feeling in the interior. Running water would be the ideal complimentary sound making you believe you are close to a river or a waterfall.

The most important point of all, is to separate the bathroom from the toilet. For Japanese the ofuro, or bath, is considered a clean space for the sole purpose of relaxation, so there is a clear separation from the toilet which is usually placed in a different room. If you don't have so much space, consider light partitions to separate each function.

Think also, of the material you prefer for your bathtub as it will determine the whole design of the room. Typical Japanese ofuro use Japanese cypress and they are deeper so you can sit up straight. The wood has a warmer and more relaxing effect as it emanates a strong cedar aroma. You can either contrast the wood with other materials and let it be the main focus, or envelop it in an all wood furnished room.

There are surely many things to consider before refurbishing your bathroom, but one thing is certain; inspired by the traditional Japanese *ofuro* style bath, you can create a bathroom you won't want to leave.



[Click the image to learn more](#)

5 Add a touch of nature with a small garden

A traditional Japanese house is incomplete without a garden.

Bringing nature inside with a small scale oasis is a common practice and has inspired many beautiful miniature gardens. Having a big garden is of course a blessing, but even in big cities where space is limited there are many ingenious ways to bring nature into your home.

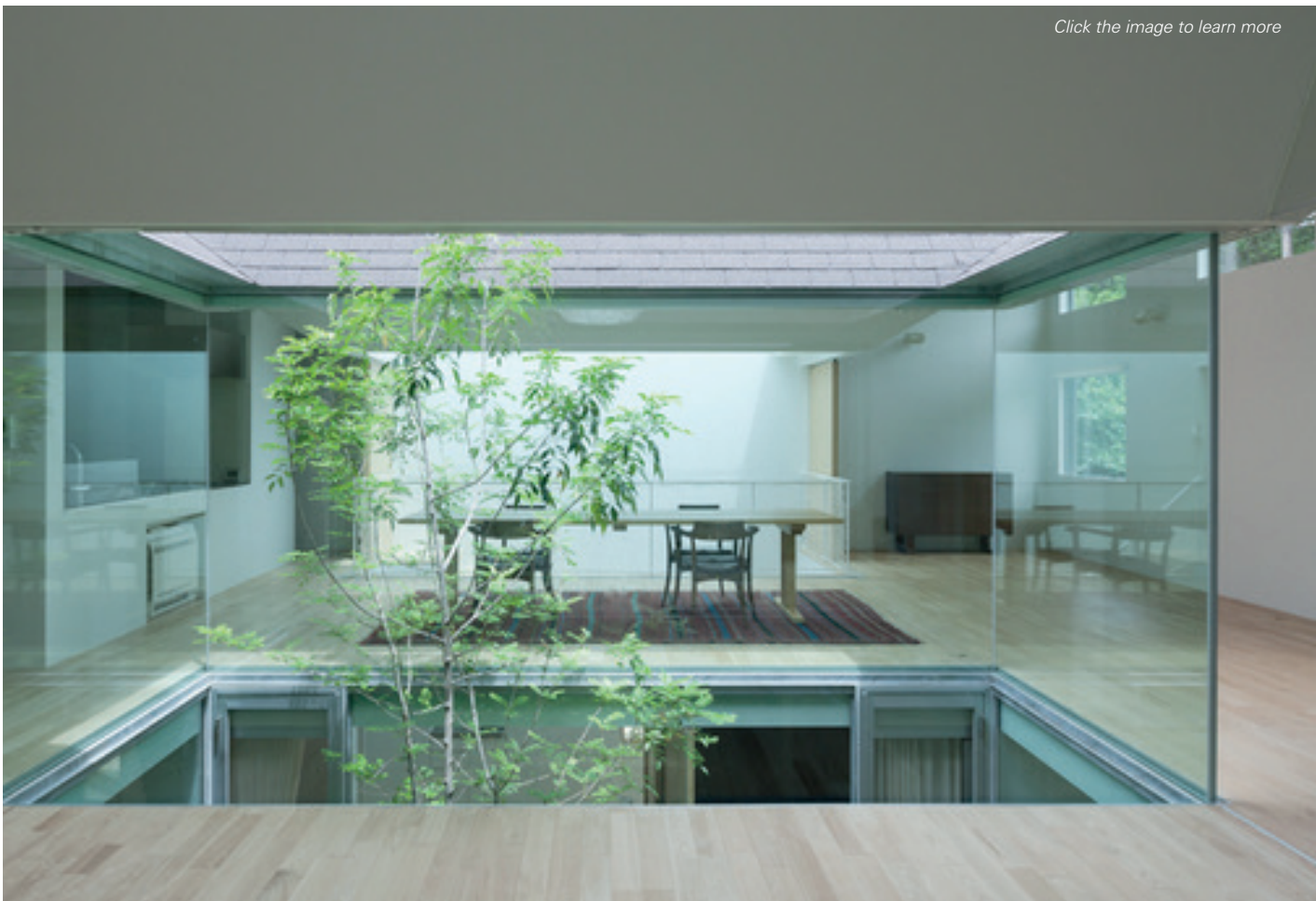
For example, if you have a narrow garden, choose tall and thin trees to make your garden look bigger. If you want to hide the view of surrounding buildings instead of a conventional window, create an opening below eye level that looks downward onto your garden. If you don't have much space or time, consider a Zen rock garden.

All year round they require the minimum of maintenance and they are perfect for tranquil contemplation and meditation.

The main elements of a Japanese style garden are the stone lantern, the water basin, rocks or raked gravel, and plants that compliment the general design.

And lastly, don't forget to create a room or platform dedicated to admiring your garden; a place where garden and house become one. Think of it as a priceless 3D painting that you want to see everyday. Where would you place it and how would you like to view it

[Click the image to learn more](#)





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Add sliding doors or screens

6

Traditional Japanese architecture is famed for its ability to change the same space into one room or several depending on the occasion.

Removable screens and sliding doors called *fusuma* and *shoji* are used as dividers, and they are maybe the most recognizable Japanese style elements you can add to your home.

Their straight lines pattern the room, while the wooden frames and paper backing filter the light, creating beautiful, warm shadows. Elaborate latticework and good quality, well carved wood help to create a breathtaking interior. This one element can change the whole atmosphere of the room.



[Click the image to learn more](#)

Use a simple color palette

The Japanese traditionally relied on earthen colors to match their wooden houses and to create a connection with nature.



To give your house a Japanese look it needs not stray from this rule.

Experiment with colors that blend well with wood. Contemporary Japanese houses play with white, the gray of concrete, light and dark browns of varnished and unvarnished wood and the green of nature. Find a color palette that suits you and stick with it throughout the house. There should be harmony throughout the house. Having different styles for different rooms can be confusing and discomforting.

More intense colors can be added as seasonal decorative elements to contrast with and compliment the harmony of your home.

8

Keep it balanced



[Click the image to learn more](#)

Where Western architecture has traditionally based its principles on order and symmetry, Asian architecture relied on a yin-yang balance.

The entire design, the elements incorporated, and the space about them, must all be balanced carefully, for the appreciation of the eyes and of the mind.

But what does that mean for interior design?

Simply put, it means that we should never overfill one area when we leave another empty. It means there should be an equilibrium in volumes and lines.

Imagine you are a painter and you want to organize your design on the canvas. Look first at the size of your rooms and how they are organized before making any interventions or purchases. Let's remember that it is not about the quantity, or the expense of the objects but how they balance with, and adjust to, the general atmosphere of the house.

Try to find furniture of the correct shapes and sizes to match the lines of your rooms. Avoid heavy monolithic elements and opt for lightweight, simpler objects and open shelves.

There is a definite preference for straight lines that characterizes Japanese architecture and design, and that separates it from each other Eastern equivalents. Simpler and easier on the mind they create a calming sensation.

Japanese rooms are famous for their transformability. Move your furniture around and experiment with the effect this has on the general compositional balance. The right objects can have multiple interesting and different formations. As a painter you will need to make a few trial sketches before you settle on your final composition.



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9 Keep it low

Japanese lack the dining room as we know it.

Because space is limited, a single room can serve as a bedroom, dining and living room. Furniture is easily carried and dismantled for different uses each time, and for that it needs to be light and easily stored. You may have seen in old Japanese movies a whole family gathered for dinner, sitting on cushions and eating from a low dining table. This *chabudai* table, and cushions, or just the tatami floor, can replace the western style table and chairs.

Of course you don't have to replace a whole dining room with a low style one just for the sake of it, but any area can be transformed this way and serve as a gathering place or study corner within a bigger room. This is an easy way to "Japanize" your house. There is something special about sitting closer to the earth. Combine it with a garden view or a decorative focal point, and there you have it, a little Zen space, all for you.

10 Give your home a wooden edge

Wood is the element that best represents traditional Japanese architecture.

It connects us to nature and to the earth. It breathes in and out, helping with air flow, and naturally adjusting interior humidity.

Even if you cannot have a purely wooden house, adding a wooden floor or wall will make a huge difference. The contrast of colors and textures between the cold and

warm elements of concrete and wood adds harmonic counterpoint to your interior design. As with all else, you need to plan and coordinate such additions carefully. Ask the advice of experts and research the possibilities, before deciding what impression you wish to achieve in your home. After all, the final choice is yours.



[Click the image to learn more](#)

So what do you think?

Can you apply these ideas to your home?

We understand that decorating a house is not an easy task, but it is definitely a fun one. Your home is your own small place in the world that you can fashion as you wish the world to be. Whether in refurbishing your house or redesigning your garden, ZenVita can offer you expert help and advice for a Japanese style house adjusted to your needs.

Follow us for new advice on how to make a Japanese style home and garden and learn more about the elements of Japanese style. Progressively you can start creating your own concrete idea of how you want your house to be.

Just like art, architecture is a universal language – a means towards understanding history, culture, and people.

Our objective is to help people participate in this conversation.

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