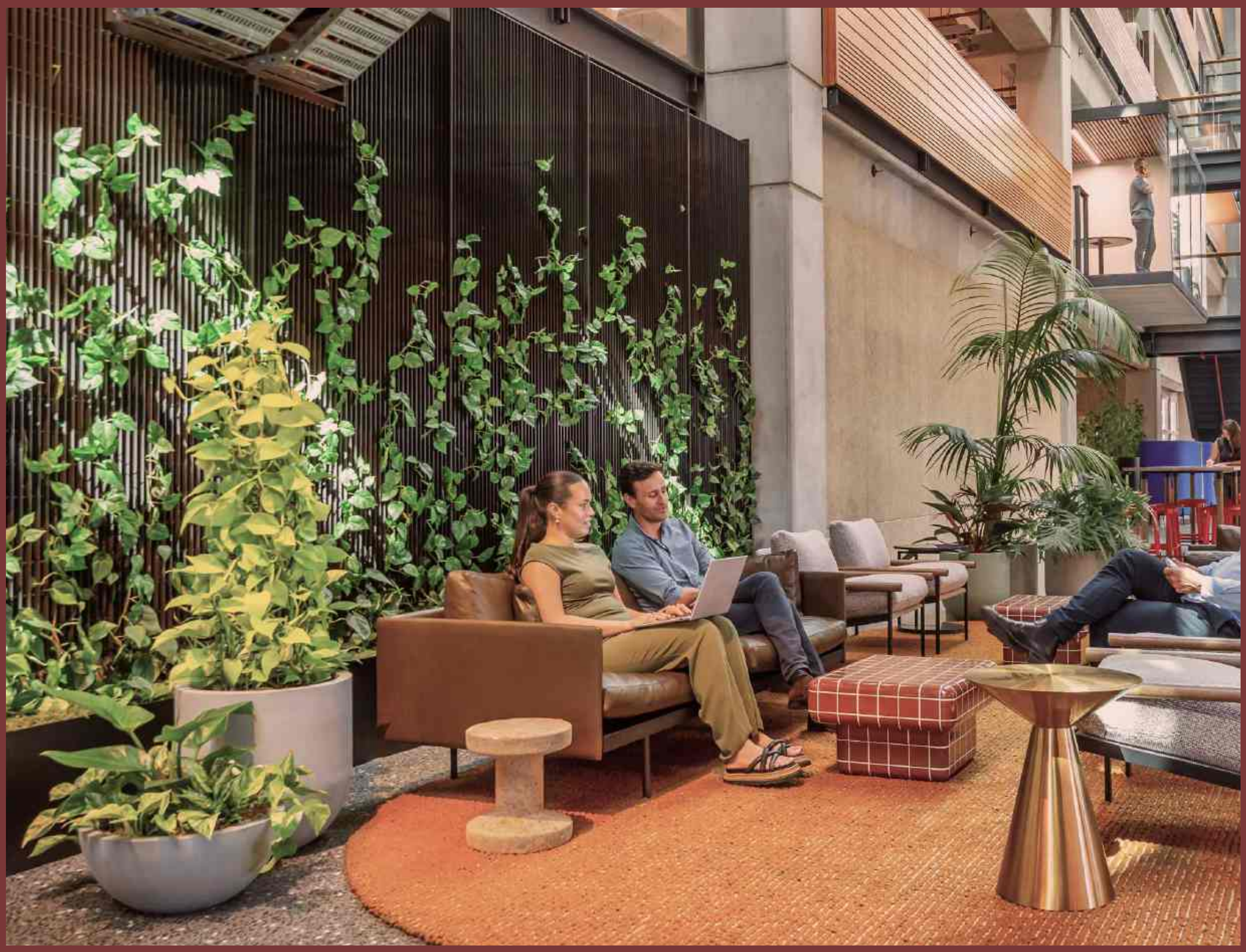
OUTSIDE IN™

The Workplace Greenery Guide.

Is greenery worth the investment? Every major study says yes.
Here's the research, the design principles, and the proof.



Meredith Connell by Outside in



How greenery transforms the workplace

Wellbeing isn't built through policy alone — it's built into the space people spend their day in. Light, greenery and natural texture change how a team feels, focuses and performs, every single day.



Mott McDonald by Outside in

01 · THE BUSINESS CASE

Is greenery worth the investment? Every major study says yes.

For office managers, building owners and workplace teams, greenery is more than decoration. It supports staff wellbeing, shapes first impressions, and improves how people experience the office every day. The figures below are drawn from independent university and industry research.

Up to
15%
Higher Productivity

Up to
15%
Higher Wellbeing

Up to
20%
Fewer Sick Days

Up to
12%
Faster Reaction Time



AIA B:Hive by Outside in

Reduction in stress

Stress shows up on a facilities budget long before it shows up in an engagement survey, in absenteeism, healthcare-linked costs, and the slow erosion of a calm, functioning office. The strongest and most consistently replicated finding across the indoor-plant research is a measurable physiological stress response: lower blood pressure, lower heart rate, and faster recovery after stressful tasks when plants are present.

Reduced Blood Pressure

Rooms with plants showed a significant reduction in diastolic blood pressure compared to plant-free rooms.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis of 42 studies (pooled effect −2.53 mmHg, 95% CI −4.14 to −0.91).

Lower Salivary Cortisol

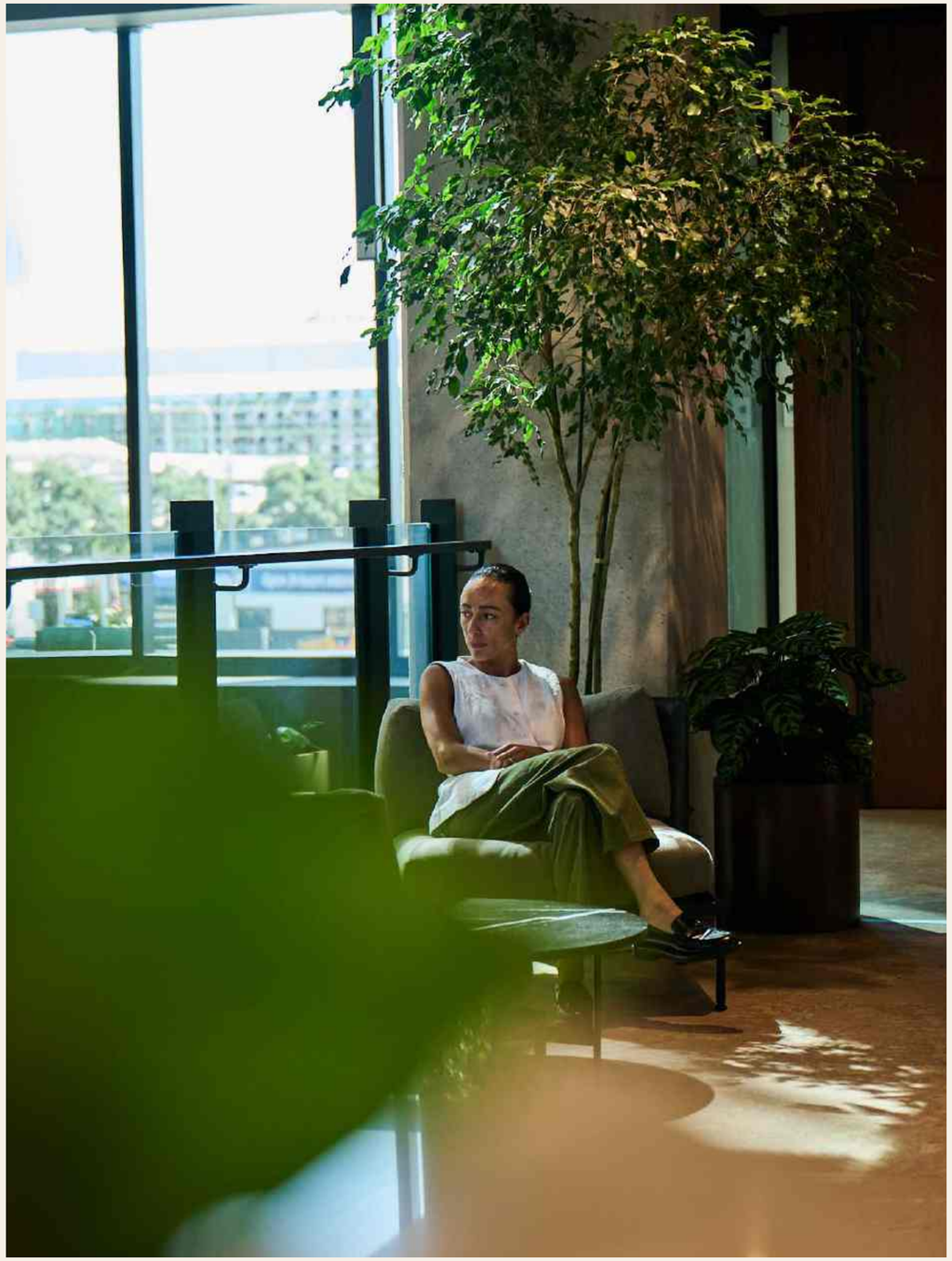
Students in planted classrooms had significantly lower salivary cortisol — the body's primary stress hormone — and fewer visits to the school infirmary than those in plant-free classrooms.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis — 14-week South Korean high-school study (school-based study, used here as a proxy for the same physiological stress response in adults).

Blood Pressure Control

In an office computer-task study, participants' blood pressure spiked less during a stressful task and recovered faster afterward when plants were in the room.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis.

Fewer Painkillers Needed

Patients in wards with plants present needed significantly fewer painkillers and had shorter hospital stays than those without.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis (hospital-ward study, used as a proxy for any environment where recovery and calm matter).



02 · THE IMPACTS

Higher concentration

Attention Restoration Theory holds that natural elements give the brain's directed-attention system a break — letting people refocus faster after a meeting, an interruption, or a long stretch of screen time. The data backs this up in measurable, task-based terms, not just self-reported mood.



Faster Reaction Times

Participants completed a computer task with a 12% faster reaction time when plants were present in the room versus absent.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis, drawing on U.S. office-based research.

Faster Info Management

In a UK office study, workers completed an information-management task and a vigilance task faster when plants were present than when they were absent.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis (Study 3).

Improved Attention

In a Norwegian office study, participants' attention scores improved significantly from baseline after completing a sustained task when plants were present — with no equivalent improvement recorded in the plant-free condition.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis.

Lower Error Rates

Search-error rates were significantly lower in buildings with indoor greening than without, across a large Chinese workplace sample of 814 participants.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis.

Improvement in productivity

Productivity is the metric facilities and leadership teams care about most — and it's also where the evidence is most nuanced. The research supports real, measurable gains, but it also makes clear that more plants isn't automatically better: placement and design intent matter as much as quantity.

Task-Based Performance Gains

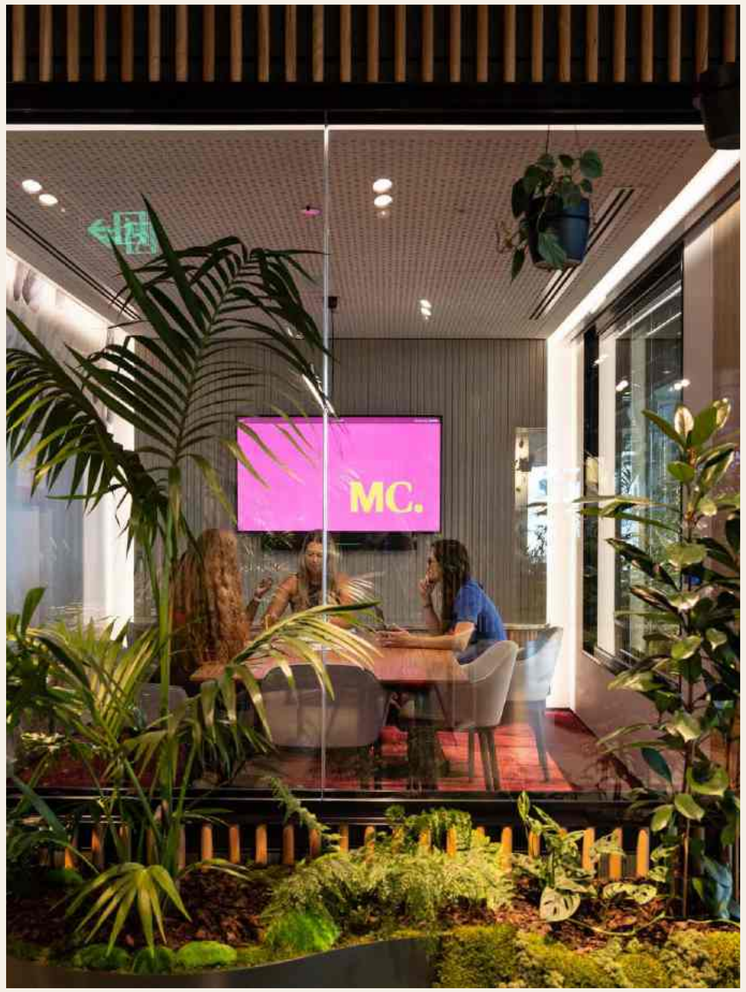
implying this was measured in an office)
Plants were linked to a statistically significant improvement in task performance and achievement outcomes.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis (pooled effect SMD 0.534, 95% CI 0.167–0.901). Measured via academic/ task-based outcomes in the underlying studies — used here as a proxy for workplace productivity.

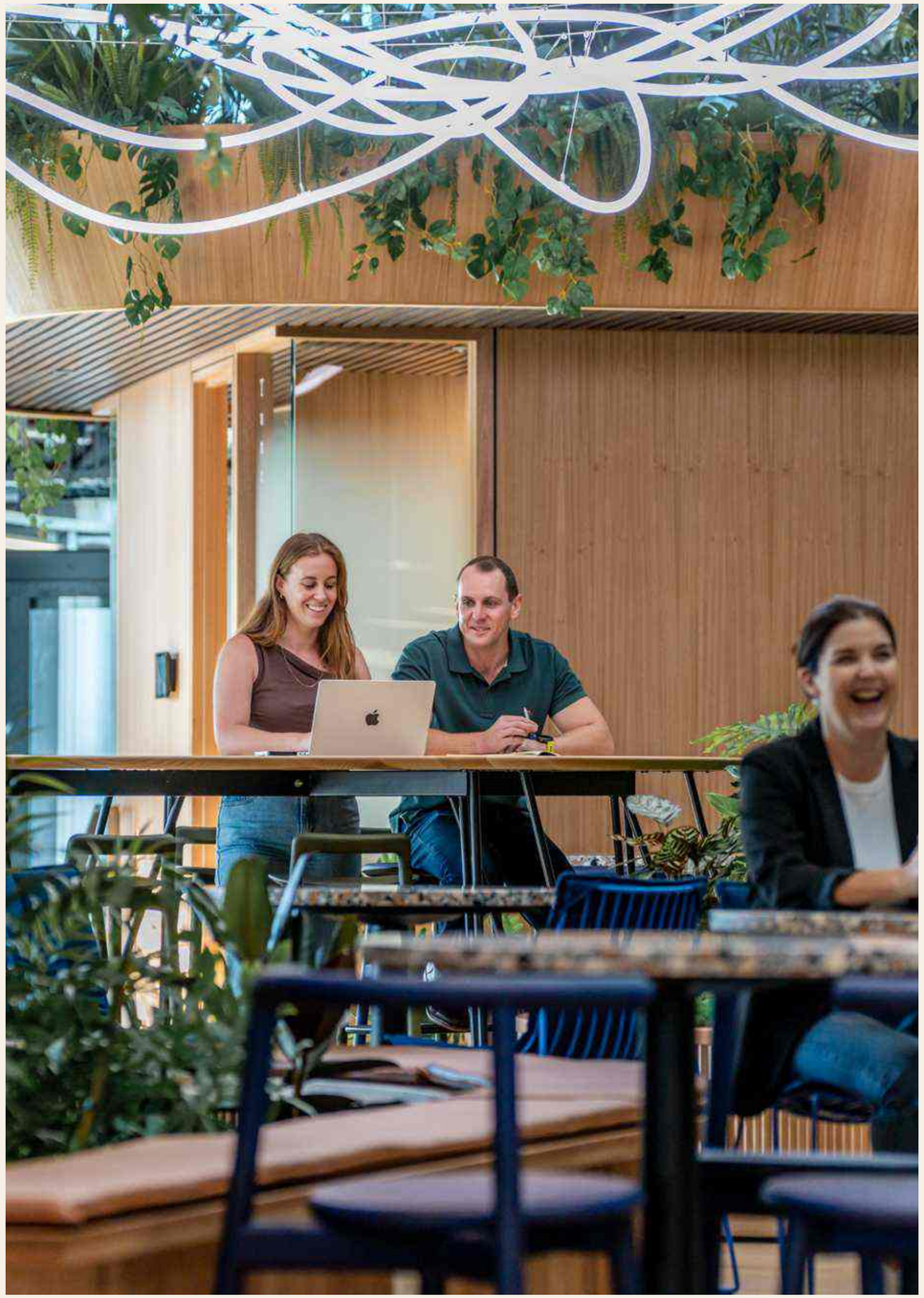
Self-reported Wellbeing & Productivity

Offices with natural elements reported up to 15% higher wellbeing and up to 6% higher productivity.
Source: Human Spaces: The Global Impact of Biophilic Design in the Workplace (Interface, 2015) — already cited in this playbook's business case.

Fine Balance

Productivity was lowest in the most densely planted office (22 pots) and highest with no plants at all — a reminder that overcrowding a space with greenery can backfire.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis, 81-person office study. Supports designing greenery deliberately for a space rather than maximising plant count — the core of Outside In's integrated-design approach.





02 · THE IMPACTS

Job Satisfaction & Retention

Retention is where the business case closes the loop: a calmer, healthier, more comfortable workplace shows up in fewer sick days and in whether people want to stay. The plant-specific research supports the sick-leave link directly; the wider workplace-wellbeing research shows why facilities and HR teams should care about this number specifically.

Less Sick Leave

Norwegian office workers with more potted plants in their workspace took significantly fewer sick-leave days.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis — survey of 364 Norwegian office workers.

Nature Heals

Indoor nature contact during the workday was significantly negatively correlated with sick-leave days.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis — separate study of 565 Norwegian office workers.

Positive Behaviour

Sick leave and recorded misconduct were both significantly lower where plants were present.
Source: Han, Ruan & Liao, 2022 meta-analysis — 12-week Taiwanese classroom study. School-based study, used here as an early proxy for the engagement/behaviour link seen in adult workplaces.

Reduced Absenteeism

Employees who feel poorly supported by their workplace are 48% more likely to be job-hunting than well-supported peers, and workplace stress is linked to roughly US$300 billion a year in absenteeism, reduced performance and turnover.
Source: SHRM 2025 Mental Health at Work Playbook, citing BrightPlan's 2024 Wellness Barometer. Not plant-specific — included as context for the retention risk a calmer environment is designed to reduce.

Big impact greenery for small offices

A practical framework for getting workplace greenery right—whether you're briefing a designer or reviewing a fit-out plan.

Indoor greenery can transform even a small office, adding vibrancy, calm and a more modern, considered feel. Good office plants don’t just elevate the aesthetic — they’re shown to reduce stress, lift mood and support overall wellbeing, making them a smart investment for staff and visitors alike.

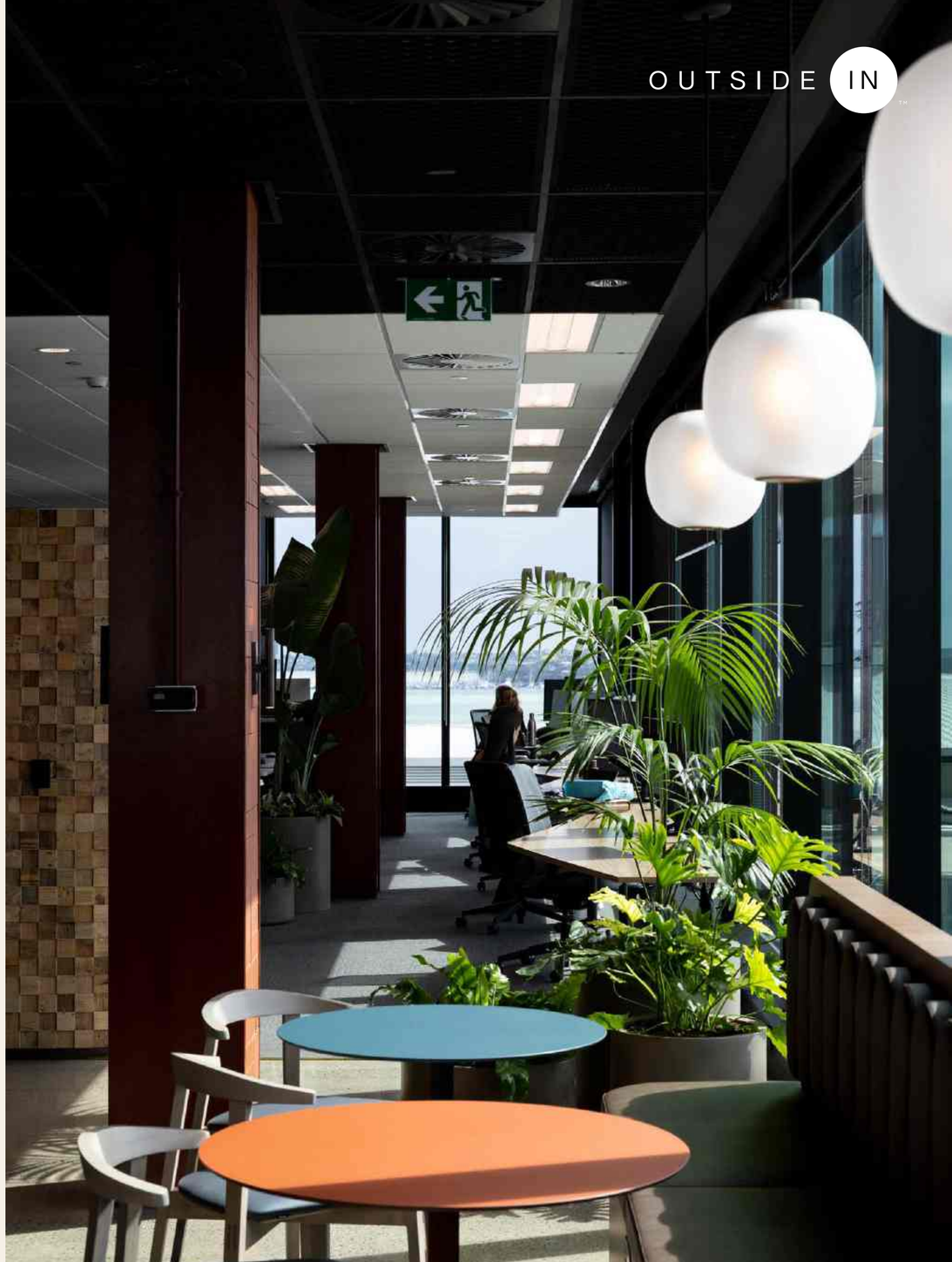
Whether it’s a simple solution with a handful of floor plants or a fully bespoke greenery design, the right approach gives you all the benefit without the upkeep. Floor, wall and ceiling-mounted systems integrate seamlessly into compact footprints, with ongoing care handled so everything stays healthy and looking its best.

What to consider

Scale to the space
A few well-placed statement plants outperform pots scattered around the room.

Multi-purpose systems
Planters that double as screens or seating protect precious floor area.

Realistic upkeep
Low-light, low-maintenance species keep care manageable for a lean office.





Zenith by Outside In







Anderson Lloyd by Outside In

Large workplaces offer the chance to use greenery

A defining feature, shaping how people experience the environment throughout the day. Planters and systems for floors, walls and overhead structures make it possible to integrate greenery into expansive interiors with clarity and intent — introducing softness, rhythm and a natural sense of movement. When greenery is planned at scale, even the biggest workplaces feel warmer, more human and more inspiring for the people who use them, every single day.

What to consider

Plan early
Bring greenery into the fit-out design stage, not after—scale means coordinating light, irrigation and structure upfront.

Define zones with planting
Use greenery instead of walls to separate collaboration areas from focus areas.

Design for maturity
Mature specimens and living walls need real lead time—factor this into the project timeline.



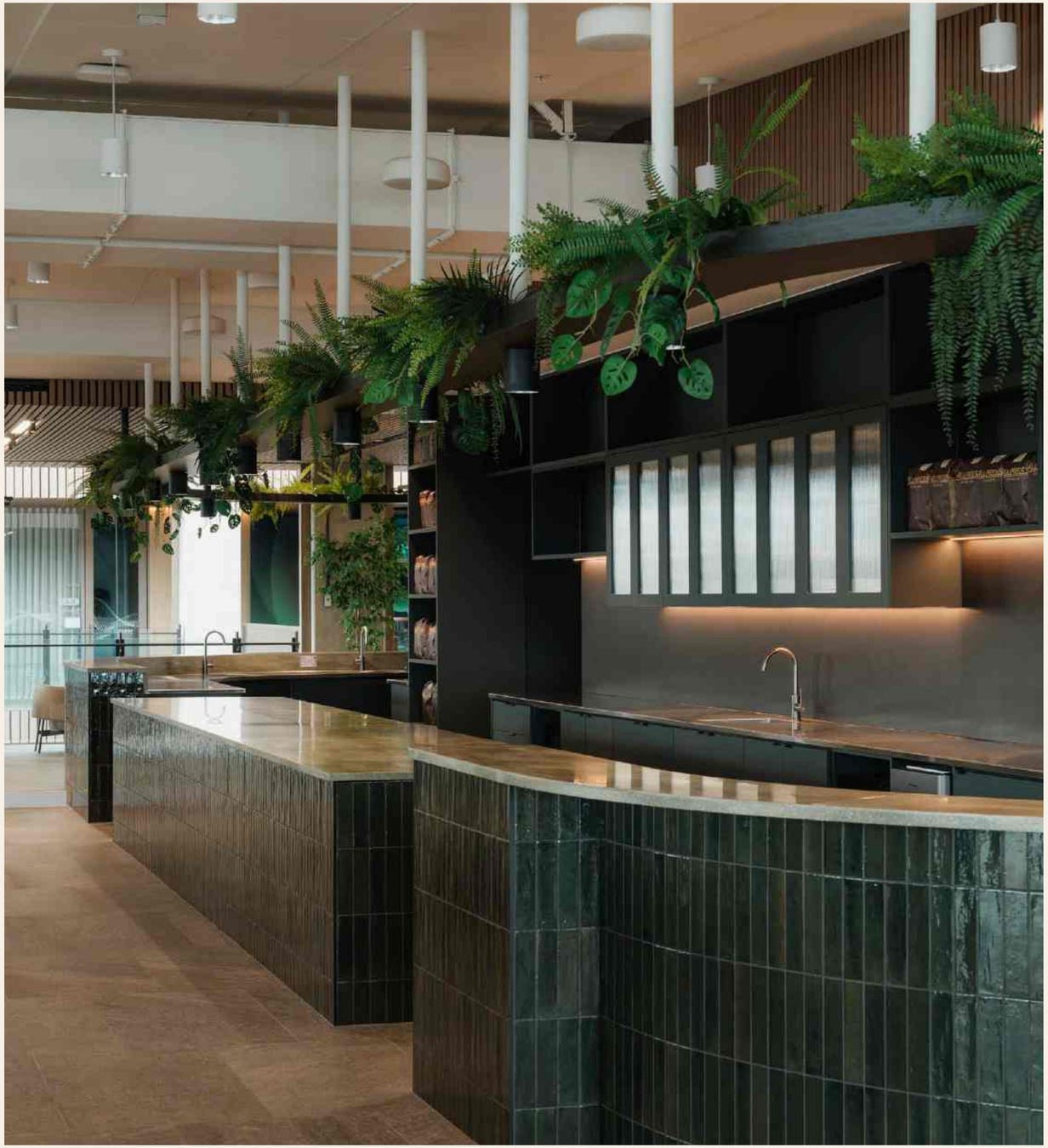


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03- REAL WORKPLACES

Making office atriums and lobbies memorable

Atriums and lobbies shape how people feel the moment they enter a building. With the right greenery, these spaces shift from busy walk-through areas into warm, calming places that create a clear sense of arrival. In tall atriums, vertical planting reduces the scale and makes the space feel more comfortable, while layered plants and natural materials add softness and connection. Planting can guide movement, define gathering areas and create small moments of rest within high-traffic zones — improving air quality and bringing warmth to spaces that might otherwise feel impersonal.

What to consider

Go vertical
Green walls and aerial systems do the heavy lifting in tall volumes without using floor space.

Treat it as architecture
Planting integrated at design stage reads as intentional, not added on afterwards.

Balance open & sheltered
Mix open sightlines with pause points so busy arrival areas still feel comfortable.





4 Graham Street by Outside In



30 Daldy Street by Outside In



50 Albert Street by Outside In

04 · FAQ

Common questions from workplace, facilities and people teams

Do you offer plant hire for small offices?

Yes. Our greenery packages are designed to maximise impact in compact spaces, using smart placement and low-maintenance species that thrive indoors—tailored to your space, whether that's a few well-placed plants or a full refresh.

Can you install an office green wall?

Yes, including compact vertical systems for smaller footprints. A living wall adds instant impact, improves acoustics, and brings a strong biophilic element without using floor area.

What does a greenery program typically cost?

It depends on your space, the impact you're after, and whether you're in Australia or New Zealand, as costs vary between the two. Every proposal is scoped around your space and budget, so get in touch and we'll put together a quote for your program.

What is biophilic office design, and how does it help?

It's the practice of integrating natural elements—plants, natural materials, organic forms—into the workplace. Research shows it can reduce stress, improve focus and create a more human, calming environment.

Do you handle maintenance as well as installation?

Yes—full maintenance is included for all plant hire and installed greenery, with a dedicated account manager ensuring everything stays healthy and looking its best year-round.

How does greenery support employee wellbeing and retention?

Independent research links indoor greenery to lower stress, better focus and fewer sick days—the same metrics people and culture teams already track. It's a low-cost, low-disruption lever for the wellbeing and retention goals already on your plan, not a separate initiative to manage.

OUTSIDE IN™

Let’s bring your workplace to life.

Every project starts with understanding your space, your people and your goals. Get in touch for a complimentary consultation to explore what's possible.

We work exclusively with commercial workplaces — offices, corporate buildings and similar commercial spaces. We're not able to support residential, food & beverage, or short-term/event hire enquiries at this time.

Get in touch

SYD michaela@outsidein.com
Sydney (+61) 432 717 305

MELB sam@outsidein.com
Melbourne (+61) 409 710 682

NZ hello@outsidein.com
021 165 2424







Sources: Han, K.-T.; Ruan, L.-W.; Liao, L.-S. (2022). “Effects of Indoor Plants on Human Functions: A Systematic Review with Meta-Analyses.” Int. J. Environ. Res. Public Health, 19, 7454. Human Spaces: The Global Impact of Biophilic Design in the Workplace (Interface, 2015). SHRM Foundation, Mental Health at Work Playbook (2025), citing BrightPlan 2024 Wellness Barometer Survey and SHRM Q2 2025 Civility Index.