

The Evidence-Based Case For OPERATING IN NATURAL SURROUNDINGS



The Research and Reasoning

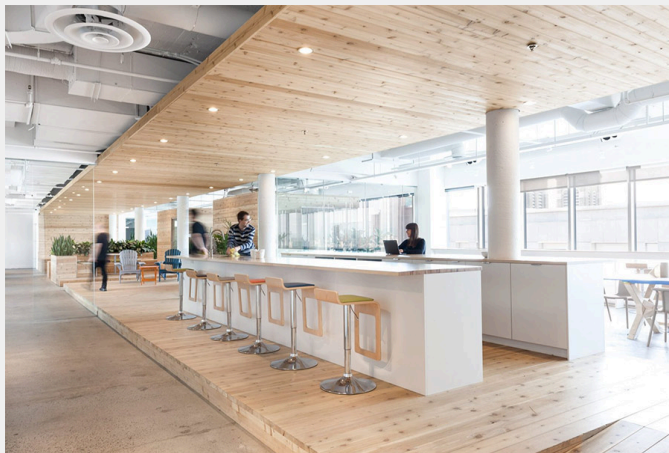
For thousands of years, we've been attracted to sources of life — to areas where there are trees, bodies of water, and other forms of life. Where there are trees, there's a strong indicator that there might also be a good place of finding food, shelter, and resources.

So it's no surprise that we humans feel safer and happier when surrounded by nature. It's an unconscious, automatic response. There's even a term for this, called [biophilia](#), which “describes how humans possess an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other living things”.

According to the research:

Just seeing something that looks “natural” — wood, verdure, mountains and stones — can [help](#) us feel calmer. It can mean stepping outside to look at the grass and trees, or [having](#) a plant at your desk, or even just [having](#) a painting or artwork of plants.

In one study in Mind, **95 percent** of those interviewed [said](#) their mood improved after spending time outside in nature, changing from depressed, stressed, and anxious to more **calm** and **balanced**.



[According to](#) The Association of Nature and Forest Therapy:

“Forest bathing (the practice of spending time around forests or other verdure) catalyzes **increased parasympathetic** nervous system activity, which prompts rest, conserves energy, and slows down the heart rate while increasing intestinal and gland activity.

Lower cortisol concentrations are also a signal that the body’s stress-response system is being triggered less. When this system is triggered, cortisol and other stress hormones are released into the body. Overexposure to these chemicals in response to chronic stress can increase the risk of anxiety, depression, heart disease, weight gain, and memory and concentration impairment.”

The [best](#) thing would be to take a walk in nature, but if that’s not really your style, then just keeping a plant at your desk or looking out the window if you have trees around the building can also make a difference.

The point being that it's a very easy, passive way to bring yourself to a default mode of stability without really having to do anything. When you're around nature, you automatically just [feel](#) more relaxed. When you're more relaxed, it gets easier to focus. When you're more focused, your productivity increases. For example, studies have also [proven](#) that indoor plants **improve focus and productivity** by up to **15 percent**.

Besides looking at trees or plants, getting natural sunlight during the day can help reduce eyestrain and headaches that might normally arise in buildings with artificial lighting. For example, according to a study conducted at Cornell University, workers in daylight office environments [reported](#) an **84 percent drop** in symptoms of eyestrain, headaches and blurred vision symptoms, which can detract from productivity.

Some studies have also [reported](#) that inhaling the scent of pine — whether on walks within pine forests or just through aroma diffusers in rooms — can lower stress. And other studies have [shown](#) that listening to the sound of crickets or ocean waves while working can also induce calm. These are all different ways one can incorporate additional natural elements into their everyday life and reap the benefits.

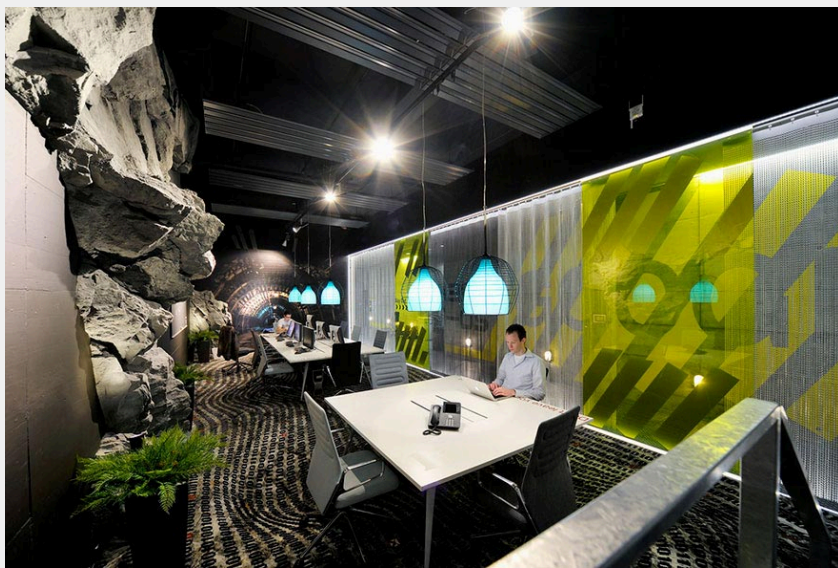
The idea of operating in natural surroundings is obviously not anything new; we've been doing it for thousands of years without really thinking about its importance. But in a world where we're working inside buildings rather than outside, and where we're increasingly doing most of our work while staring at screens — it becomes important to realize that there ARE real health benefits to doing so.

Real-Life Case Studies From Influential Companies and Nations

Some of the world's top companies have taken measures to incorporate more natural elements into the workplace so that their team members are more relaxed and focused.

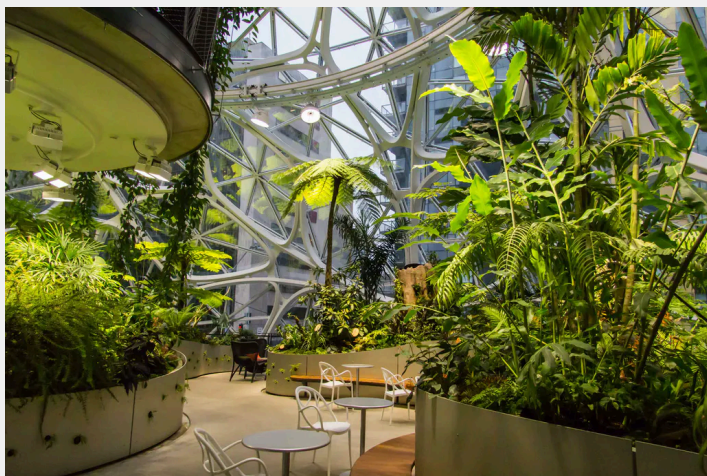
For example:

[Google](#) — which has a market value of \$1.5 trillion and raked in \$180 billion in 2020 — finds ways to design its work spaces so that they resemble natural settings.





Amazon — which has a market value of \$1.7 trillion and raked in \$380 billion in 2020 — has an entire complex, called The Spheres, which contains over thousands of plants of all different kinds, and where its team members can work and interact with one another.





Apple — which has a market value of \$2.2 trillion and raked in \$65 billion in 2020 — has a massive park in its Spaceship campus, and much of its interior decor is made to resemble natural elements like wood.





Microsoft — which has a market cap of \$1.9 trillion and raked in \$143 billion in 2020 — took this application one step further; rather than bringing the outdoors, indoors, they brought the indoors, outdoors. They [made](#) tree houses where its team members can work while outside, either alone or to work in groups.

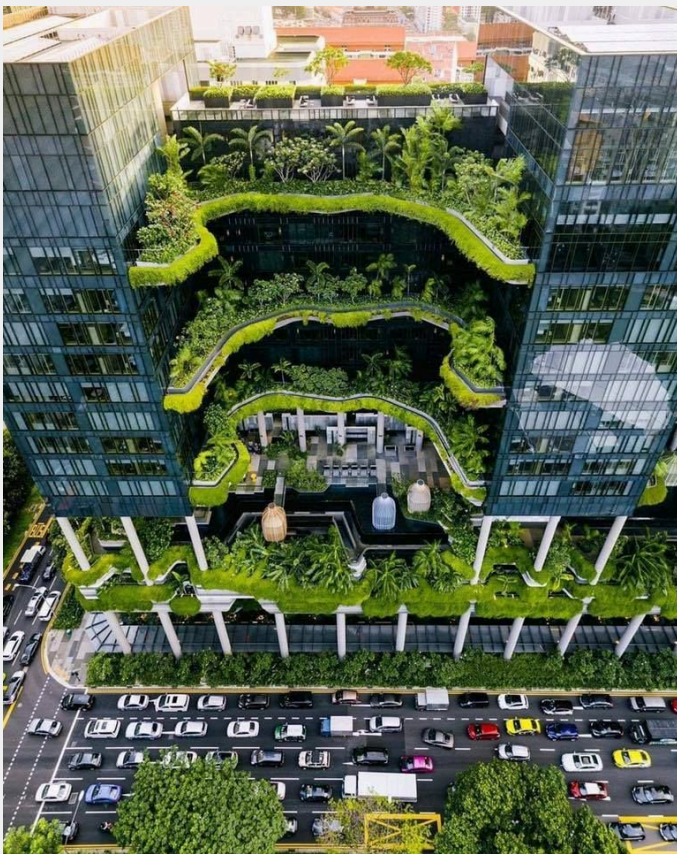




Interestingly enough, in a research poll of 1,614 North American employees, it was [found](#) that access to **natural light and views of the outdoors** are the **number one** attribute of the workplace environment, outranking stalwarts like onsite cafeterias, fitness centers, and premium perks including on-site childcare.

Other than companies, even entire nations are ensuring that their inhabitants get to spend enough time in natural surroundings. In [Finland](#) — which is known as the [happiest](#) country in the world — public health officials recommend that citizens get 5 hours a month, minimum, in the woods, in order to stave off depression. This is evidence-based. They found that people need this time in order to preserve their mental health.

And in Singapore — known as one of the [cleanest and safest](#) countries in the world — they [utilize](#) the idea of a City in Nature, so that everyone has access to greenery, wherever they are and no matter their income.



Personal Examples

As for myself, I've found that I feel more at peace when I get to sit near a window with natural sunlight, and where I can look outside and see trees, clouds, and the sky. This helps when I'm working, or just reflecting, or even when talking with others in a meeting. I've also found that I feel more relaxed when I'm near furniture made of wood (or made to look like wood). Why, I can't really explain — but it makes a difference.



While working in office environments, when I would get eye strains and headaches from sitting in the building and working at the computer, I would step outside for a bit and look at the natural areas surrounding the premises.

In addition, I enjoy taking walks in my neighborhood or in local parks, where I'm lucky to have lots of trees, grass, and landscaping around me.

Aside from feeling relaxed when surrounded by the verdure, there's also an inexplicable happiness I get from watching a squirrel climbing a tree and warily glancing at me, from seeing sleek birds flying and chasing one another, from listening to a woodpecker hammering into wood. This is why I recommend at least going outside from time to time, and not just looking out the window or keeping plants inside the place you operate. It's just more immersive.