



BIG BOLD BOTANICALS

Bath interior designer **Clair Strong** looks at 2015's fresh take on florals and offers tips on how to make your home more of a stylish Secret Garden than Grandma's blowsy chintz

Floral prints have always been in fashion. From the elaborate wallpapers of the Victorian era to the whimsical designs of the 1960s and the delicate ditzzy prints of the early noughties, our love for a good flowery print has endured. Today, we're favouring a whole new look altogether. The subject matter remains the same but the overall effect is different to anything we've seen before. Enter bold botanicals, a trend that will be huge in 2015.

We're seeing a move towards more organic, illustrative floral designs. The patterns are bigger and much more colourful but still very tasteful. I'd describe it as greenhouse meets artist's paintbrush. Although it's a modern look, it definitely has roots (excuse the pun) in those classic vintage styles."

Take a look at the vivid prints in the main picture, above, by Jane Churchill for Colefax and Fowler. Intrigued? So were we when we first saw Jane Churchill's beautiful designs. But how do we make such a striking trend work in our own homes?

1 Go Big

The bigger, the better. This trend is all about size so I suggest choosing a large scale print for your wallpaper, fabric and accessories. Surface View's (surfaceview.co.uk) fantastical wall murals, wall stickers and tiles feature truly enormous blooms. And yet despite the size, there is an air of subtlety about the designs because they appear to have been painted and sketched. Many of them have been sourced from the V&A and the Royal Horticultural Society so you know you're in safe hands.

Large floral prints will invigorate even the most tired of rooms. You can breathe new life into your space with just a carefully placed rug. But the print has to be big and it has to be colourful if you really want to make an impact.

2 Keep Everything Else Simple

Let the botanical print be the centrepiece of your room and keep everything

else simple. Neutral hues and minimalist accessories act as a frame for the mural/curtains/sofa/rug and highlight the pattern. This soft-handed approach is sophisticated and understated but still has that wow-factor.

You can choose traditional neutrals, like white and pale green, which will make the space feel light, airy and fresh. Or you can go for an ultra modern look with dark walls in grey, navy and black. Both palettes work equally well with floral prints so it's really down to you and the style you want to create.

3 Or Go All Out

Subtlety isn't for everyone, in which case you could go all out with lots of contrasting patterns. When done well, this look is inspired. But it can teeter on the edge of garish and overworked so it requires a lot of planning and rearranging to get it just so. Eclectic, clashing rooms may look like they were just effortlessly thrown together but it's actually very difficult to get right. It takes time, patience and a really good eye for design. If you want your home to look more Secret Garden than Grandma's chintz, follow these basic rules:

- Limit your use of colour. I would recommend sticking to a palette of no more than four hues. The colours should complement each other too; clashing colours will just look garish here.
- Use colour to tie the room together. With your set colour scheme you can unite that floral print sofa with the blossom-adorned rug, even if the prints and styles are completely different!
- Experiment. Don't settle on the first way you arrange things. Try creating different vignettes and layouts until you

find the perfect one. Have fun with it!

4 Accessorise

Another approach altogether is to just inject a hint of this trend into your existing decor scheme. Accessories are one of my favourite ways to quickly and affordably update a space.





BLOOMING BIG: main picture, Colefax & Fowler by Jane Churchill, inset teardrop pendant Bodo Sperlein. This page, top Surface View Bunches mural and right, duvet set by Bluebellgray

Spruce up your bedroom with a showstopping watercolour duvet set like those designed by Bluebellgray (bluebellgray.com) and add a few contrasting throw pillows to complete the look. More throw pillows and lamp shades give the living room a whole new feel, while framed fabric creates unique wall art for the study.

You can let the trend grow in the kitchen too, with beautiful crockery and tableware. Liberty (liberty.co.uk) known for the delicate floral prints they've been manufacturing for over 100 years have embraced the bold botanical look. Their Betsy collection is perfect for those who like the idea of bold botanicals but prefer a more traditional aesthetic.

And finally, for a taste of the unique, consider sculptural lampshades and light fixtures in organic shapes. Bodo Sperlein's (bodosperlein.com) teardrop pendant is adorned with hand-made bone china flowers. The delicate flowers are highly detailed and incredibly life-like. It's everything this trend embodies; striking design, true craftsmanship and natural beauty. ■

Clair Strong Interior Design is a small, friendly, creative business based in Bath and London, providing services for residential and commercial clients. Visit: www.clairstrong.co.uk or contact Clair: clair@clairstrong.co.uk.



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