

Botanical BOHO

Monica Durou, co-founder of interior styling studio C'est ici, invites you into her stylish garden with expert tips to get the look

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PROFILE

Colombian national Monica Durou, pictured left, lives in Jumeirah, Dubai, with her French husband and their two sons. She co-founded the interior styling and fit-out company C'est ici with fellow Colombian Tatiana Jaramillo, pictured right.

Describe the look and ambience you wanted to achieve in your outdoor space:

We wanted to create a Bohemian-chic patio reflecting our roots, with a Zen look and feel. I am Colombian and my husband is French, so we wanted to mix and match our origins to make it personal and very relaxed. We both work so we wanted a space for our “out of office hours”, somewhere very far from our routine, and this is now my favourite space where we can disconnect.

Most importantly the space reminds me of home. Botanicals and the incorporation of greenery is definitely one of my signature additions. I was brought up in Colombia in a beautiful house built by my parents from scratch. The house was surrounded by one of the most beautiful forests in Rosales, located in Bogota at the heart of the city.

How did you achieve this home-from-home, boho look and feel?

My husband and I are drawn to organic materials, rattan, cane, hemp textures and reclaimed wood, so we focused on these materials when it came to the outdoor décor. My personal style is rustic and bohemian with a twist of contemporary touches. I love basics in neutral colours and, above all, versatile options that you can mix with each other creating endless possibilities. A clean, layered look was definitely one of our goals for the outdoor area. ▶



The Durou's Zen zone is a serene space with delicate sheer drapes, real and faux hanging plants, undyed materials and natural textures. 'I personally love mixing fringe, crochet and macramé textures, and a canopy over a bed/living area is a signature boho embellishment that I wanted to incorporate,' says Monica.



Clockwise from right The dining area has experienced a recent revamp with a new outdoor table from IKEA and plastic Masters-style chairs to withstand the heat; the latticed surround is perfect for plants to climb over while the banana plant at the front is a must for a tropical look. This handmade hammock is a nostalgic reminder of South America for Monica, while the Byron Bay daybed from Tribe is made from delightfully fashionable bamboo.



MONICA'S OUTDOOR CARE TIPS

- 1 Choose materials wisely and think about maintenance, rusting and durability. Look for furniture made from aluminium, which is rustproof outdoors.
- 2 Powder coated metal – as seen on the Acapulco chairs – is protected by a dry paint finish. The paint doesn't run or drip, providing an attractive and durable coating.
- 3 Rattan, wicker and bamboo can fare well, however, keep them under shade to avoid losing colour.

- 4 Reclaimed wood and teak are durable woods outside.
- 5 Buy UV-resistant protective covers from Amazon or Al-Futtaim ACE for delicate furnishings, and bring items like cushions inside when you can to avoid sun and sand damage.
- 6 Keep revamping flower beds and pots as it is impossible to keep everything in your garden alive. Declutter dead plants, and invest in survivor plants, and place delicate ones under shade.
- 7 Decorative sheer curtains are a beautiful accessory but they are difficult to keep white so we use them in winter and keep them inside over summer. ■

Botanicals were another priority, both indoor and outdoor and we focused on making the space pretty green. Both my husband and I were raised in homes surrounded by nature and botanicals. We therefore wanted to replicate this look and feel in our home and add that romantic French feel.

While boho spaces tend to have certain similarities in that they are always eclectic and share similar features, no two rooms are ever completely alike. We wanted to put together family heirlooms, handmade items like hammocks and objects from our travels. I feel that accessories should tell your story, so feature what you love: tapestries, vintage bottles, maps, or mismatched china, you name it.

How did the transformation process happen?

Our outdoor project did not happen from day to night. When we first moved to the villa, the outdoor area was completely naked. We even have concrete in some parts of our greenery today, so I must say that the area has been an ongoing project.

We first started with the landscaping and sourcing of the plants which is completely credited to my husband. These were mainly sourced from Acacia Garden Center, Al Safa 1 nurseries

and Dubai Garden Centre. The hanging plants were sourced from The Habitat which we absolutely love. I started with my beautiful hanging plants and once the greenery was up I wanted to incorporate wood sticks hanging from the ceiling. I am a wood fanatic, so we found the perfect wood sticks and this resulted in an inexpensive detail which added character.

When it came to furnishings, we both love natural materials and we really wanted an outdoor day bed. Tribe was our answer and we found the most comfortable bamboo and rattan day bed with a nude mattress included. We complemented the look with a natural wood stool/table and added two Acapulco chairs from So Chic for a retro touch. The look and feel focused very much on natural materials and lattes for the colour palette. We added layers of different cushions from White Moss, Tribe and Anthropology, which added to the boho look.

I am a little bit of a romantic and I wanted to bring the indoors out, so we added very light, sheer curtains which fitted perfectly and felt just right. We also love hammocks, which is very South American. One of them is displayed as an outdoor accessory, part of my Zen zone. I think it is essential to have your roots and origins incorporated into your home.



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