

residential architect

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home front
tips and trends from the world of residential design

grand banyan

The 25-foot-tall banyan tree in this great room of a Potomac, Md., home needs no watering. Or pruning. Or sunlight for that matter. Because it's a big faker—a *really* big faker, with cantilevered limbs spanning 30 feet across the two-story room and into adjacent entry, kitchen, and breakfast areas. Made by San Diego, Calif.-based Naturemaker Monumental Trees, the banyan is not just a pretty plant pretender.

It serves a real function: The steel frame, covered with composite bark and silk leaves, conceals one of the home's structural columns.

"Most of our residential clients use our trees as indoor sculpture,"

says Naturemaker's co-owner Gary Hanick. Other residential applications include stumps for seating and leafy additions to children's rooms. Founded 20 years ago by Hanick and designer Bennett Abrams, who developed a method for mummifying plant life through a wax displacement process, the company now employs 50 full-time staff—including drafters, engineers, welders, sculptors, and painters—to fashion its foliage. Prices range from \$25,000 to \$250,000.

—shelley d. hutchins

Each tree is handcrafted in Naturemaker's 60,000-square-foot studio in San Diego, Calif., and then shipped in pieces to the site. Once there, an artist directs installation and adds final flourishes.



Courtesy Naturemaker Monumental Trees