



Ticking space constraints out of the books to make a green haven

Balconies could be more than just a place to sit and sip coffee. It could be a haven far away from the daily humdrum of life. In this section, learn how to make your balcony look more natural and more into the lap of Mother Nature with the all new array of balcony gardens.

The basics of Urban Gardening

Today, with the rising issue of scanty residential land in horizontal stretches, vertical expansion is the word of the day and cities are caterpillaring with skyscrapers. This is basically a bad news for all those garden lovers! Urban gardening, thus is the only solution. Balcony gardens are a beautiful kind of manifestation of urban gardens. It can be defined as a set up of ornamentally arranged vegetation on the patio area. However small the space, it can be effortlessly converted into a balcony garden with some of the most beautiful and enticing varieties of flora. Every piece of greenery, starting from small flowering shrubs and creepers to plants yielding harvests of healthy home-grown veggies and crunchy fruits, can be cultivated in a balcony. Many

people around do not even get started with implementing the concept of balcony gardening due to the fear of space constraints and lack of experience, leave apart excelling in the world of garden growers. This is actually a misconception, because there are innumerable examples wherein, a balcony as small as 10"X2" has been cleverly converted into a fruiting little space.

Utilizing spaces in the best manner

When we look at our homes, not many of us try and figure out the possibility of growing plants in our homes. The explanation conveniently framed is the lack of space to accommodate an array of pots in the house, and the balcony is too small for that. For the supporters of this explanation, it would be a piece

of useful to know that plants just grow up anywhere, a wall, a broken ceramic, an abandoned piece of wood, well kept containers, balcony and window railing, almost anything that is lovingly reserved for them. So they can very well be cultivated in a balcony or a window extension. But the most important part is to decide upon the material and sizes of the containers that have to be utilized and the soil that is being used. Small accommodations in apartments are not very encouraging as far as gardening is concerned. However scanty places can be compensated for by using small containers, cylindrical in shape. Better yet, is the idea to plant seeds in a bigger rectangular earthen bed, one beside the other with a gap of 6 inches between one another. The result of this practice is astounding! This

earthen bed can be hung down from the railing of the balcony to give a beautiful space-saving look. The show could be enhanced all the more by placing a set of ornamental decorations that would complement the green display. Another idea, if the balcony is a roofed one, is to cultivate canopy gardens, with flowering creepers rising all around the railings to give a feeling of a shaded oasis. Broken bamboo sticks or metal rods can just be supported against the balcony wall and creepers can be comfortably planted so that they can crawl along them and rise up to the roof. For those who want their walls to be colorful and decorative, it is wise to place a wooden frame of networking blocks supported along the wall. Creepers would just climb up the frame in no time, decorating the wall.

Another economic and ecofriendly idea is to construct an edible garden. Foliage plants like lettuce, spinach, cilantro and mint can be grown without much effort in areas of the balcony that do not get much of sunlight. Hybrid varieties of tomatoes, plum and cherries can be planted along the edges. This does the task of keeping eyes spellbound with a bounty of juicy colorful fruits and berries hanging down the boughs. Another motivating benefit would be that the salads would now be free of chemicals!

Common mistakes that deserve correction

Many people feel absolutely obsessed with their gardens, so they do not prefer to prune their plants down when necessary. It should be kept in mind that pruning is indispensable. When the hey-way growing ends are chopped down, it makes more space for abundant sunlight filtration, water precipitation and perfect cleaning. Overwatering or underwatering is another pair of blunders. Both of them are extremely harmful to plants. Overwatering causes water percolation with a subsequent process of leaf fall. The rescue could be searched for in holed pots that enable the seeping out of extra water from the bottom of the pot after the soil has drunk up the maximum it can. Underwatering would cause famine in the little garden. A third mistake is the belief that large pots and containers are good. On the contrary, they are more space demanding and ask for the best of physical stamina when lifted or moved for cleaning purposes. It is always better to go for small containers or to half fill the larger ones. This enables easy

mobility and better cleaning systems. It is always good to place the containers on a tray. Placing pots on naked floors make cleaning a tough job. And for those who are the possessors of a wooden floor, placing the pots on the naked ground could be nightmare. Water seeping from the pots would make the wood soggy.



Any space can be converted into a flowering area. A piece of broken ceramic, a soda bottle, rotting sticks of bamboo boring iron railing, baby bath tubs, anything, just anything can be creatively used as a potential place to grow fresh and crunchy salad components.

Tips for selecting the right variety

Selecting the right variety of plants is absolutely necessary to get the balcony garden bloom with beauty and freshness. The factor that affects the choice of plants to be seeded is the position of the balcony and consecutively the amount of sunlight that is received throughout the year. Northern situated balconies do not get much of sunlight throughout the year. It is a fruitful decision to seed shade loving vegetation like Dieffenbachias, Syngonium, Scindapsus and Marantas. Foliage growing makes a lot of sense. East facing porches get a mild supply of sunlight till about the midday. So flowering plants that do well in scanty sunlight can be planted. Plants like Impatiens, Spathiphyllum, African Violets, Hibiscus and foliage plants such as Aralias would be a good option to go for. This is fortunately not the case with those who have a South and West facing balcony. There is a lot of sunlight that could bathe plants almost



Mistakes are fine, but it is better to learn from such mistakes. They make a good cultivator out of a mere amateur gardener. Happy Balcony Gardening!



throughout the day, so much so, that some of plants might have to be taken in due to the burning effect of the sun's heat on the roots. Lantanas, Bougainvilleas, Ixoras inclusive of potted roses, Button roses, Petunias and Clematis are some of the better options. Cacti and succulent plants are good survivors.