

# Real Estate

## GREEN HOUSE

### How green is your wall

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Paucity of space in urban habitations has made several gardening enthusiasts turn to innovative ways to pursue their passion. Vertical gardening is one such creative idea that is fast becoming popular among those having small homes as it occupies vertical space to give a different design element to any garden.

It is akin to any picture hung on the wall, but with a difference that the hanging garden is live and ever changing. It is also an aesthetic green way to combat indoor air pollution as these plants help in absorbing toxins from the air.



With an artistic design any wall, within a room, in the lobby or in the balcony can be used for having a "green" zone. A pretty and impressive hanging garden of leaf succulents can be created by using this technique. Leaf succulents are a natural choice as these plants can store extra water in their leaves and hold on to it to release only when needed. This feature makes them look beautiful as their leaves have thick, fleshy and juicy appearance as compared to those of other plants. These plants with their striking forms and easy maintenance are much sought after by gardening enthusiasts and can be placed artistically in a designer format through an intelligent selection of different colour foliage. Depending upon individual choice, the garden can feature one species or a mix of species, or plants of flowering or foliage species. The wall can also be created with other plants such as ferns, chlorophytums, ivy, begonias, bromeliads and many more. Air plants can just be placed on a wire mesh to create a vertical garden.



A number of plants of almost the same size and of the same species or different species are required to create a "wall garden". It is convenient to take cuttings of leaf succulents as these root easily

and similar size cuttings can be selected from the mother plant. Leaf succulent species suitable for wall gardens are: aloe aristata, a. jucunda, kalanchoe marmorata, k. tomentosa, sedum rubrotinctum, s. morganianum, s. burrito, agave stricta, a. parviflora, a. victoria reginae. Leaf succulents are suitable because they:

- Are slow growing and can remain in the garden for a longer time.
- Come in different hues and textures.
- Are resilient plants that can survive with little water.

A hanging wall garden can be created in a frame of about 60 cm x 75 cm with 10-12 cm depth. It can be made of wood or any other material that is able to retain moisture. To add to its appeal a designer picture frame with matching colours, texture and materials that complement the wall can be placed on the frame.

The display looks best when viewed at an eye-level height. A well-balanced and artistically prepared garden always attracts attention no matter where it is hung. The arrangement made with flowering plants is a sure and easy way to add colour and flair to the garden outdoors as well as to complement the decor of a balcony or a terrace garden. This provides an additional design element to pep up the overall look of any area`



### **How to create wall garden**

- Take a suitable sized frame as per the space available on the wall. The frame should be small so that it is easier to hang and also for the frame to bear the weight of moist soil mix.
- Place matte finish PVC sheet at the back and on the inner sides of the frame to avoid leakage of soil and water.
- Fill the frame with moist light soil-mix consisting of peat, vermicompost and sand in equal proportion.
- Nail a wire mesh of 1 cm radius holes on top of the frame to restrict the soil-mix from coming out and also to allow the plants to grow without falling down.
- To add appeal, a designer picture frame with matching colours, texture and materials can be placed on the basic frame.
- Nail two brackets at the back of the frame ensuring some gap between the frame and the wall for further insulating wall and the system.
- Drill a hole at the base of the frame for additional water to drain out or alternatively a drip irrigation system can also be installed. Water requirement for succulents is very less, so watering twice a week during growing season should be enough.
- Take slow-growing cuttings or off shoots of almost the same size of the desired succulent plants and plant those in the frame through the holes in the wire mesh ensuring that these are set firm in the soil mix.
- Place the frame on a flat surface in a cool location that receives indirect sunlight for 2-3 hours for the plants to settle and the cuttings to develop roots.
- Spray water on the plants only when the soil begins to dry.
- After 4-5 weeks hang the frame at a suitable place where it receives some sunlight.

## **Tending tips**

- Avoid fertilising in order to restrict the plant growth.
- With the passage of time some plants will overgrow. These should be replaced with suitable plants.
- Some of plants that over-grow and disturb the balance can be pruned periodically.
- Remove dead/dried leaves and algae or fungus that might gather in the frame periodically.
- Hang the garden where it receives some sunlight for its better growth.

*The writer is President of the National Cactus and Succulent Society of India*