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**REAL ESTATE**

Saturday, August 11, 2012, Chandigarh, India

# Real Estate

## GREEN HOUSE

### Jazz up your terrace

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With flat culture taking roots in the region and land becoming scarce, terrace and balcony areas are increasingly being utilised for gardening. Terrace or balcony gardens are in effect an extension of interior designing to the space outside the living areas in which plants are used creatively to create the décor effect.

Before planning such a garden or selecting plants for it, the following points should be kept in mind:

- **Amount of sunlight available:** The amount of sunlight that will be available to the plants depends upon the direction of the balcony or the terrace. At some places taller buildings and huge trees around tend to restrict the sunlight. This information will help in selecting the different species of plants. Hardy and sun-loving plants can be placed on the sunny side where as shade-loving plants can be placed in limited sunlight.
- **Water availability:** Terrace gardens generally need more water than the normal gardens due to greater evaporation from soil and leaves. The amount of water available on a regular basis will enable one to select a wider variety of plants. There is an option to counter water shortage by installing drip irrigation automatic watering system using an automatic watering timer.

## Container class

Those who neither have enough space nor the time to establish a reasonably good terrace or a balcony garden, there is an option to have a container garden.



For this no treatment of terrace is required for providing proper drainage. Light weight fibreglass or plastic designer containers about 18-22 centimetres in depth and of reasonable size with holes at the base are taken. These containers can be fabricated as per the design; the design should be made keeping mind the space available. To make the compost light and nutritious, normal garden loam, vermi compost and peat in equal proportion along with some bone meal, neem khali and NPK (nitrogen, phosphorous and potash) are properly mixed.

## Ornamentation



Ornamentation of these gardens dramatically enhances their beauty. It can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Some sort of movement and sound in the garden adds an extra dimension to it. A small plug-in fountain will do the job excellently. Wind chimes can create magical notes to soothe the senses.
- To further accentuate, a small water reservoir in conjunction with the plug-in fountain can be catered to place water plants like *Sylvania natans*, *Pistia stratiotes* and water

- **Wind velocity:** Terrace environment is normally windier, so some plants may need to be anchored if the wind speed is high, failing which they may get uprooted. Wind further increases the requirement of water.
  - **Screen:** In case of high- speed winds a robust screen should be erected to break the speed of wind. This will also provide shade to the plants and can be utilised for the flowering climbers to further add grace to the garden by allowing them to grow vertically. This will also give additional space to jazz up the terrace with hanging baskets.
  - **Railing:** It is essential to ensure safety.
- ferns.
  - Solar lights or any other lighting arrangement will add grace and glamour to the garden in the evenings.
  - Small pebbles and thematic stones along with small animals and bird figurines can be aesthetically placed.
  - To maximise floral space, hanging baskets can be used.

### **Plants suitable for such gardens**

- Plants with fibrous roots and shallow root system should be preferred over plants with taproot system.
- Drought-tolerant plants often survive the best in such "far from ground" gardens.
- For the garden to remain colourful at all times of the year, plants with different flowering periods and with different texture and foliage colour should be selected.
- Plant selection: The following plants are suitable, but other plants may also be tried.
- Cacti and other hardy succulent plants are a natural choice.
- Flowering annuals: phlox, pansies, asters, daisy, dianthus, nasturtium, balsam, zinnia, mini poinsettias.
- Foliage plants: croton, coleus, peperomias, asparagus, dieffenbachia, dracaena.
- Climbers: begonia, quisiqualis, heliotropium, bush rose.
- Vegetables: cucumber, lady finger, brinjal, tomatoes

However, to establish a proper terrace garden, corrugated sheets can be used and the desired slope for drainage is given. Nylon net is placed over the sheets to avoid compost from getting drained off and further about 3-4 centimetres of small brick-pieces are placed over the net to allow the drainage of any extra water for the well-being of the plants. Finally place 18-22 centimetres of compost and create your own garden.

### **Tips to keep the garden healthy and beautiful**

- To grow bushy annuals, pinch them at the initial growing stage to increase lateral branches, resulting in more number of flowers.
- Remove dead flowers as these take away avoidable sap from the plant.
- During extreme summer, watering may have to be done twice daily.
- Don't grow plants having big leaves as these will get tattered due to high velocity winds on the terrace area.
- Select plants with shallow root systems.

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