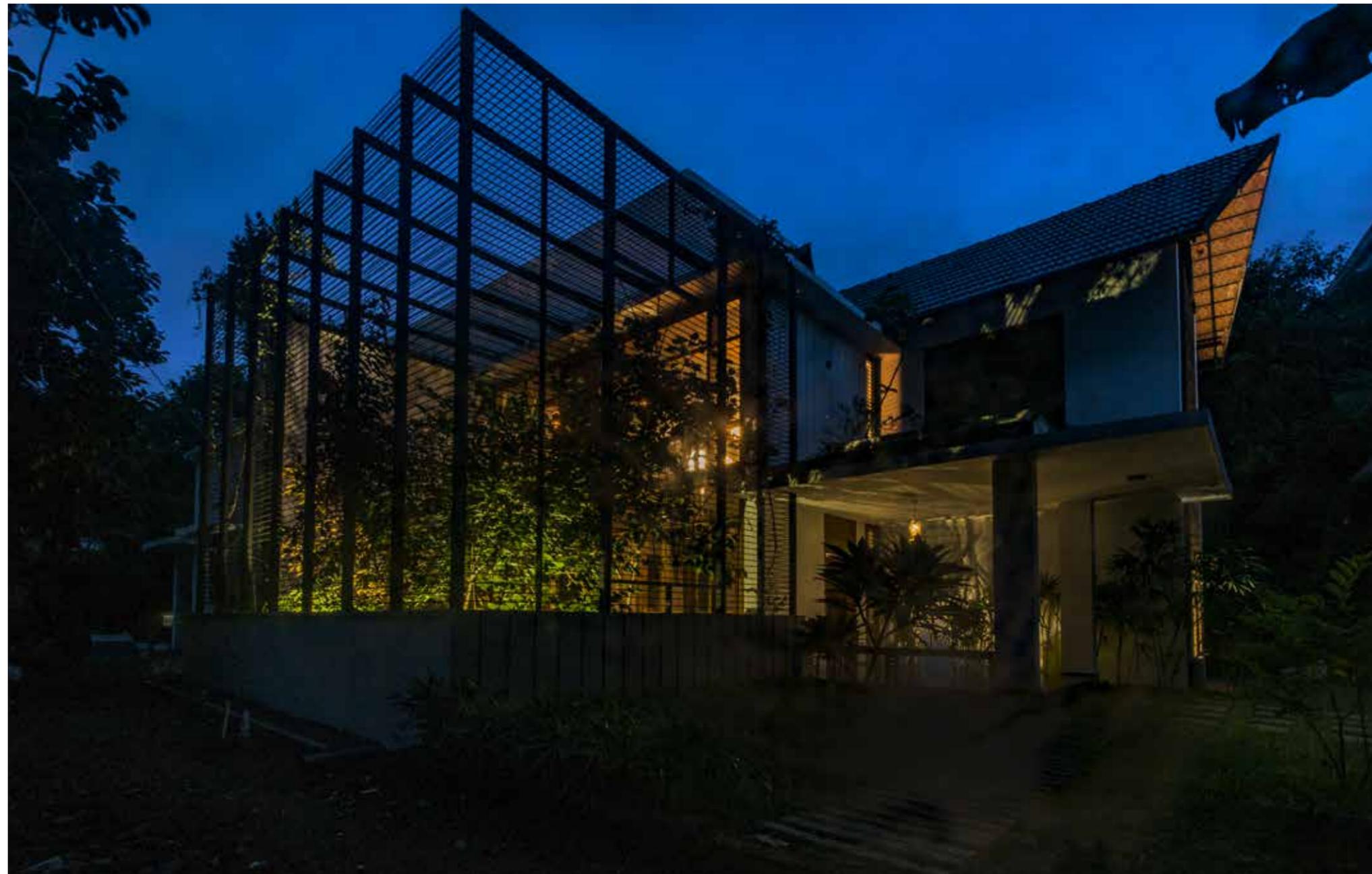


Green fingers

With shrinking homes, an easy way to incorporate nature into your home is vertical gardening. Yes, now you can use your walls to create the green patch you always wanted

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO



Vertical garden or green wall is one of the most popular design trends of 2018 and with good reason. Most homes today are becoming smaller but there are still a large number of people who want to incorporate something green in their homes. Having an element of nature not just brightens up the home but also adds to the positivity of your home. And even when you stay in a small apartment, you can have your little green space whether you have a balcony or not. For now, even walls can serve as spaces to build a garden.

Ishan Thacker, associate director, Vector Projects (I) Pvt. Ltd., a Bengaluru-based integrated interior solutions company explains, "There are different ways to go about a vertical garden, stacking crates, reusing bottles, stair gardens, tower gardens and many more. The balcony or verandah of one's home is first of the many places that can be explored. One wall

of the balcony can be converted into a garden; add in a coffee table, swing or bean bag and make it a perfect spot for leisure times. As a budget friendly idea, hang baskets from the balcony railing or replace the expensive pots with old plastic bottles." You can also place it near the main door. The idea is to add a touch of green that will also improve the air quality of the home.

Vertical gardens are one of the most innovative ways to incorporate nature in your house. Having vertical gardens ensure you do not give up valuable floor space for the same. These can be grown on any free wall of your apartment or the compound of an independent house. "However, the walls have to be chosen carefully because it is important that they receive sunlight. If one is going in for this concept only for aesthetic purposes, then you may choose to go with an artificial vertical garden which can be made on any wall of your choice. One can also incorporate a



small vertical garden in an area near the kitchen to make a vertical herb and salad garden. Living rooms and kitchens are also good choices for vertical gardens. Being eco-friendly, vertical gardens make for a viable option, both for commercial and residential spaces," says Gita Ramanan, architect, interior designer and founder, Design Café, Bengaluru.

Do it right

When you are working on a vertical garden, choose the plants wisely as some require more light, space or water than others. For indoors, plants needing less sunlight and water are suitable, small flowering plants can be a good option as well. The height should always be considered before building a vertical garden. Do not let your garden touch the ceiling; if placed too high, the top row could be difficult to reach and the plants can be spoiled.

Also, take the weather into consideration. C Alankrutha, chief architect, NHance from Navin's, a Chennai-based interior design firm explains, "Vertical gardens can be developed in two planes- horizontal in the form of living walls or garden walls, green walls, green facades and non-horizontal in the form of sky courts, pocket or strip gardens, hanging gardens etc."

If you expect high winds, use appropriate setting or frame for your vertical garden to minimise the loss. Hanging plotted plants is perhaps the most common way of getting the green in. You can have them hanging in the balcony, or the kitchen window, or even in the bathroom. "Build a trellis on a wall; a black metal trellis and planters on it creates a terrific vertical garden. These tones are trendy and stylish. Make sure to make a slender frame preferably with wrought iron. Vines and ivy can be used here but

require constant pruning and water sprays. This will require some maintenance, but will create a gorgeous space. Mix this wall with a nice chandelier, or shiny brass features to create an elegant and surprising mix," says Ashish Dhingra, founder, MarksDzyn.com, a Gurgaon-based interior firm. Do not build your garden on the wall that has existing leakage problems. It can further degenerate the wall and not form a sturdy base for the garden. Pooja Bihani, interior designer, Spaces and Design says, "Any wall mass that has a good viewing distance and good sunlight is an ideal space for vertical greens. We have recently created a vertical garden in the double height wall and ceiling of a staircase."

You can create a vertical garden on your own or seek the help of a professional in the field. "To implement this idea, opt for easily available clay pots or plastic bottles which can be hung

Tips to build a vertical garden

- › Choose a space of the living room where plants could be placed conveniently
- › Make sure the space or wall you choose gets adequate sunlight
- › Choose plants that do well indoors
- › Use colour-coded pots that will go with the rest of your décor
- › A vertical arrangement can also be used as a divider between seating and dining spaces
- › For the kitchen, stacking crates can be used for growing edible plants
- › Place a miniature stair garden or a modular shelf in bathrooms for added aesthetic appeal

with ropes. Currently, set frames for vertical walls are available in the market. These are easy to install. Arranging these pots in a pattern makes the space look decorative and lively. Choosing the right place to incorporate the type of plants plays a vital role as a few of them require adequate sunlight and water," says Sandesh Dhanraj, founder and CEO, Noah Interiors.

Myriad benefits

Green walls can help transform unattractive structures and unproductive areas. "Vertical gardening has clustering of plants together which creates a micro-climate; fertilising, watering and harvesting is much more convenient and time saving. Also, it reduces soil-borne diseases and attack of weeds," says Harpreet Ahluwalia, owner, Earthly Creations.

Dr Mousumi Ghosh, founder director, Team Future, an educational initia-

tive in Kolkata adds, "Not only do vertical gardens act as a visual impression but they also serve a whole lot of other purposes. The plants will improve air quality of the house by absorbing pollutants. A vertical garden will also act as an insulator and help maintain the temperature of the house." Vertical gardens can be used in the kitchen to grow herbs. "Herbs are beautiful plants, versatile in the kitchen, and easy to grow, not to mention they can help in eliminating unappealing kitchen odour. You can grow a variety of herbs like thyme, basil, mint, rosemary to name a few, in small, easy-to-manage, colourful pots, to add both visual and olfactory appeal to your kitchen windows," adds Sameer A.M, founder and CEO, Bonito Designs, a Bengaluru-based design firm.

It's time to put your green thumb into action. And remember, sky is the limit when it comes to adding a touch of green to your living space. □