

Vertical limit

VERTICAL planting is an ideal way to make the most of limited space and hide unsightly eyesores – but it doesn't necessarily have to involve climbers.

Anyone visiting the major garden shows this year will no doubt see an array of vertical planting, featuring rich tapestries of plants in weird and wonderful structures, which aim to add colour and form to an otherwise vacant space.

Indeed, vertical planting caught on several years ago, inspired by Frenchman Patrick Blanc, a pioneer in this field who has transformed many buildings' facades into living art, planting rich mixtures of lush foliage plants.

This concept is ideal if you have limited space on your patio or simply want to hide an ugly wall or fence and while some of the designs you see at garden shows may seem impractical or simply too complex to construct in a modern setting, manufacturers are attempting to meet demand with a number of simple options.

You can now buy anything from simple black canvas pockets with a number of holes in them for the plants, which attach to the wall, to salad and herb vertical planters, living art frames displaying a combination of plants, and troughs which will house lush green plants over a wide area of wall, equipped with water reservoirs which will provide a steady trickle to the plants as they need it.

"Vertical planting has increased in pop-

ularity because it makes best use out of the urban garden where space is limited, while living walls are sustainable, eco-friendly, purify the air and reduce the heat in towns," says Gillian Bond of Tree-box, a living wall specialist.

Indeed, it's known that plants significantly improve the surrounding air quality, reduce sound pollution, increase biodiversity, insulate buildings and cool our sweltering cities in the summer.

While elaborate schemes are available which involve professional installation, domestic gardeners can create their own living walls and vertical plantings without having to be DIY experts.

On a small scale, Burgon & Ball has just launched its Verti-Plant. Made from heavy duty non-woven material, it features planting pockets and an internal irrigation system which allows water to filter from one pocket to the next, while the bottom pockets are sealed to reduce drips and mess. Priced £9.95 for two, it's available in selected garden centres.

With larger constructions, you may have more success going for lush foliage plants rather than flowers. Good specimens for wall planting include ferns, euphorbia, ajuga, heuchera and geraniums. Place shade-loving varieties at the base of the area and sun-lovers, such as geraniums, thyme and sage, at the top.

Add some spring bulbs for a happy surprise when it is still cold, and try some wild strawberries for the children to pick all summer.



Verti-Plant from
Burgon & Ball