

# The only way is up

by Hannah Stephenson

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. 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 popularity because it makes the best use 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 Treebox, 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.



Vertigo, a free-standing modular system enabling you to grow your own flowers and vegetables



Gillian Bond of Treebox, a living wall specialist

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 good garden

centres and at [www.burgonandball.com](http://www.burgonandball.com).

Alternatively, you can frame a floral or foliage display in a living art frame, priced £47.99 from [www.gardenbeet.com](http://www.gardenbeet.com).

If you're reluctant to fix anything on to a fence or wall but have limited ground space, Vertigo, a free-standing modular system is worth considering.

It's designed to hang standard-sized grow bags vertically from the free-standing frame. The sandwich design allows bags to be changed at the end of the season. Priced £299, it will be available from the end of March at [www.vertigo.co.uk](http://www.vertigo.co.uk).