

## how to create a **green oasis** in the city

Small city spaces like balconies, terraces, yards, garages and roofs can be converted into attractive green oasis – corners of nature, where you can escape the stress of daily life in the city. The design approach of these areas are basically alike; A classic version is to have various, interesting plants on the terrace, planted in pots or flower beds. In addition, you can include lounges and create a sunny, relaxation area or have a table with some chairs, converting it in a pleasant space for working or outdoor eating. A hammock can also be fitted into even quite tight spaces. If there is enough space, one can add water features, which acts as a mirror, cooler, moisturizer or water sculpture. This can be a compact pool, bubbling fountain or specially decorated water area. The flooring material for the terraces is the same as in the garden - marble, ceramics, wood, natural stone, modulate concrete paving stone or bricks. Lights are an important part of the terrace composition, especially in the evening.

Because of the limited available area, it is recommendable to use simple design and to avoid a variety of plants, as well as too many objects in the outdoor area

Before planning the design of the terrace, it is important to consider a few practical issues, as the weight of the molded pots, the soil and flooring, access to water, drainage of pots and the terrace, and also the load, which the concrete slab can stand.



### Different ways of planting on the terrace

If the terrace is small, the best option is to arrange a few interesting plants in beautiful pottery. If there are more than five pots, it is recommended to hide them behind a decorative board or to build up a special stand, where to plant the flowers. For long and narrow terraces it is better to 'soften' the corners with plants, with different height: high, middle and low.

Depending on the whole conceptual design of the terrace and individual preferences, the board can be either solid or a light mobile construction. Light constructions are usually wooden, metal or plastic, glass and non-corrosive steel. In case you want to have solid board or flower stands, they should be built up of bricks or concrete and decorated with natural stone, ceramics or covered with plaster. In general, flower stands provide better conditions for plants than pots.

### Finding the right pots

Ceramic, wooden, plastic or concrete flower pots – the choice depends on your individual preferences, the style and design of the available space. Ceramic pottery is beautiful but needs to be frost-proof. Plastic pots are cheap and can handle temperature changes. There are varieties of concrete flower pots on the market, which are also frost-proof. Flower pots, made of zinc are becoming more and more popular in contemporary gardens. Wooden flower pots are created according to individual measures and design. Try to improvise using different material; metal boxes, buckets and other available materials.

### Choosing plants

Nowadays garden centers offer a great variety of species, appropriate for planting in pots or at places with limited amount of soil. If you want to have a green terrace throughout the year, choose evergreen plants. For a more colorful garden choose blooming bushes, perennial and seasonal flowers. In order to create an exotic atmosphere, use plants of Mediterranean origin such as oleanders, palms, olive trees or small orange trees. It is essential that during the winter these plants should be kept indoors.

A very good effect is achieved when putting trees in large pots – they immediately make the balcony a greener spot and add height and structure to the design. Trees in large pots can also be used as mobile protection against the wind and sun. As they live for many years if taken care of, it is recommended to use tree pots that are lasting and beautiful.



As long as they are regularly watered, most of the evergreen and blooming bushes are suitable to be used on the terrace. The fragrant plants and herbs, as well as the winding and climbing plants, can easily become part of the composition. The perennials and the decorative grasses are appropriate to be used as a detail of the whole creation or separately – just as an accent.

Roses can be an interesting accent on the terrace, provided there is enough sun and that they are regularly fertilized. They are attractive because of their fragrance and long blossoming period. The contemporary varieties that are dense and compact are very suitable for the balcony or the terrace.

Seasonal flowers are a fast and effective way to attain intensive color on the terrace. It is possible to change them several times throughout year, experimenting with different sorts and combinations each season.

### Taking care of the plants

When planted in pots, plants have limited space for their roots. That is why they grow more slowly than those planted in the garden and rarely reach their full, potential size. The plants should be periodically replanted in a larger pot. Because of the limited space, the soil dries faster than that in the garden, which means it must be watered more often, especially during the summer months. During the spring and the summer season, plants need to be fertilized each month because of the limited soil and nourishing materials in the pot. The slowly-soluble mixed nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium fertilizer is highly recommended. It stimulates simultaneously the growth of the leaves and the formation of more and larger flowers. Plants in pots are much more likely to freeze during the winter, so keep them sheltered – even if they are covered with snow, they are likely to survive till next spring.

*Exclusively for Colliers Magazine: Virginia Kostova, landscape architect*

