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words by



**Chandré Peters**

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## Concrete jungle grows a pair



**I want to pick strawberries from my wall for breakfast! Impossible you say? Read on:**

See if you can dig a hole in that, Fido! It takes weeks to perfect that vegetable garden and months to see produce, but four little paws can destroy it all in the time it takes the postman to cycle past the house. Justin Sam has brought the clever concept of putting gardens on a wall to Johannesburg with his business, Vertical Landscapes.

Almost any plant can be incorporated into a vertical garden from seedling stage and the walls can be installed indoors and outdoors. The garden contains no soil but uses rock wall (a candy floss type of substance) to hold the plants in place. The plants get nutrients that are dissolved in water, which is pumped through an irrigation system to keep the plants moist without getting the wall or anything else wet. Don't believe me? Look at their previous Decorex stand where televisions were propped up on the wall among the plants. Nothing gets wet that shouldn't be wet!



More plants in the city means more oxygen production and companies are finding vertical gardens to be the next green step. Restaurants are building herb gardens on their walls to save space and money while corporates find this a way to get Green Building Credits (a rating system that grades how environmentally friendly buildings are). Your vertical garden can be functional by growing edible plants; or it can be all the beauty of the jungle in your bedroom without the bugs.

So you move into a fancy new loft apartment with a great view of the skyline, a decent sized balcony and-cough, cough, cough! You just looked down and got a lungful of truck fumes. Vertical gardens counteract the air pollution by absorbing gases such as carbon dioxide through photosynthesis and producing oxygen. This

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lessens your carbon footprint and eases the guilt about forgetting Earth Hour! A lot of plants go into one vertical garden so you've covered your bases for Arbour Day too.

A vertical garden comes with a two year maintenance contract in which the company regularly tends to the plants, replacing the nutrients and trimming the leaves. If you're like me then your cotton wool covered popcorn seed plant also died in Science class, so you don't want to have to maintain any garden. I want all the beauty with none of the work and I just want to pick strawberries from my wall for breakfast!



Justin Sam describes his gardens as a living, breathing work of art. I describe it as jungle fever in the city, or a garden for Jo'burg's gardenless. It would be great to see more walls of green among all the grey buildings around us to remind you this is Africa and not just another concrete jungle. It's about time the city grew a pair!

Vertical Landscapes displays their mobile garden at all the big home shows like Decorex and the Homemakers Expo. Go to [www.verticallandscapes.co.za](http://www.verticallandscapes.co.za) or email [Justin@verticallandscapes.co.za](mailto:Justin@verticallandscapes.co.za) for more information and installation of vertical and rooftop gardens.

Have a story or opinion you want to share? [Click here](#)

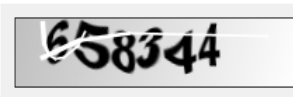
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