

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – Terrace Garden

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1. What is a terrace garden?

Also called a roof garden, it is a garden that cultivates vegetables, fruits or flowers on the terrace, balconies or roof of buildings, also called as a roof garden. The kitchen garden, a standard in every Indian household, has shifted to the roof due to constraints of space, and called a terrace garden.

2. Where can one start a terrace garden?

These gardens can be created on almost all kinds of buildings like residential flats, individual houses, commercial hubs, godowns and factories.

3. What should be done before using the roof as a terrace garden?

A simple water proofing of the roof is enough to start you on your way. Various water proofing products are available in the market that will ensure that the roof is protected, water resistant and no leakage occurs.

4. Can roots of plants cause any harm to the building?

Plants with fibrous roots do not cause any harm to the roof but avoid tap roots like in a mango plant, as they may penetrate the roof and harm it by growing its roots in the structure. Sometimes the wind or birds may bring seeds that can germinate and take root on the roof itself; these should be checked for and removed.

5. How do I start on a terrace garden?

You can begin greening your terrace with these simple steps, and then move on to bigger ideas:

- Take any simple pot or 'gamla' or better still recycle any of your old container
- Get the soil ready and mix compost, soil, coir peat (or sand) and vermicompost in equal quantities
- Cover the drainage hole at the bottom of the container with a broken pot piece or a flat stone, and fill it up with the mixture. You will have to drill a hole in the recycled container first.
- Pour water and check that no soil is discharged through the bottom hole.

- Wet the soil and plant your seed or sapling
- Watch your greens grow.

6. What type of containers can I use?

Containers of all sizes, shapes, whether of plastic, ceramic, metal or mud can be used. If you are an environment buff, you just need to use your imagination! Your coke bottles, take away plastic boxes, old sacks, coconut shells, old broken buckets, your dented kitchen pots and pans, just about everything can be recycled and used as containers.

7. What can I plant in my garden?

You can start with something from your kitchen shelf, that is available and used in everyday cooking like coriander (dhaniya), fenugreek (methi), gram (chana) and chilli (mirchi). Once you gain confidence you can move onto vegetables of your choice and even fruit trees like banana and pomegranate. Almost all vegetables can be grown - creepers, drumsticks, lime, tomatoes etc.

8. How much quantity of vegetables/ fruits can I expect of my terrace garden?

You can grow at least 6 vegetables per season. And your 1 sqm of terrace area can give you anywhere between 25 to 50 kg of vegetables in a year!

9. Do I need any agricultural knowledge to start a terrace garden?

One doesn't need any farming background to grow a roof garden. All it needs is an enthusiasm for green living and getting your hands dirty.

10. What are the advantages of terrace gardens?

Some of the benefits to health, aesthetics and environment are

- Convenience of safe, pesticide free, healthy green and fresh vegetables
- Conducive to a routine of physical exercise, clean air and close to nature
- Increases amount of oxygen in air
- Reduces overall heat absorption of buildings, Insulates the building against heat and cold
- Reduces sound pollution.
- Acts as a habitat for city weary birds and animals
- Reduces indoor temperature by 6- 8 degree and can reduce air conditioning cost by 25% to 50%.

11. How much time will it take to begin a terrace garden?

It can take as little as a week to set up and you can begin harvesting your greens in a month's time.

12. What about the maintenance of these gardens? Will they consume a lot of time?

Once your garden is established, an hour a day is more than enough to maintain your green area. It is the perfect area to exercise in and improve your fresh air intake.

13. How much will the terrace garden cost?

If you plan to start a terrace garden at one go, it will cost about Rs 20,000, which will be the investment on seeds, saplings, containers and the soil bed/manure. The set-up cost will reduce if you begin small and stepwise, invest a little every month, and use recycled containers. The joy of watching your plants grow and thrive will outweigh any nominal expenses in terms of seeds or saplings that you buy. Look at it as a 'green' investment, where after the initial burst of energy and time, you can expect healthy returns!

14. What about the pesticides and disease management?

You can make your own manure at home and learn how to prepare Panchagavya and organic pest repellents for use in your garden.

15. Any contacts of organisations that can help me begin?

- 'Grow what you eat and Eat what you grow' - [Garden City Farmers](#)
- Organic farming movement of Punjab - [Kheti Virasat Mission](#)
- A seed conservation and sharing initiative in Auroville - [Pebble Garden, Aurobrindavan](#)
- Mumbai's own - [Urban Leaves](#)
- 'Gather for all beings' - [Thanal, Trivandrum](#)

IWP requests users to view the same as a starting point in collating information on understanding and starting a terrace garden and to add more suggestions, information as responses in this thread.