

# Balcony gardens offer plethora of options



**Carla Keast**

## AROUND THE YARD

You can't change the size of a balcony, but you can change its feel. The right combination of seating, containers, and plants can transform what is often a drab, outdoor storage closet, into a lovely garden.

Most people want a sitting area for reading or dining. A smallish table coupled with a comfy chair or two is a great starting point. In all likelihood, you'll be seeing them every time you look out the window, so choose ones that you love, and that allow you to see through to the view beyond the balcony — much more appealing than the backside of a big clunky chair.

Find out your building regulations. These may limit the weight and height of what you put on the balcony, and whether things can be attached to walls and railings or not.

Give some thought to the pots. They are going to make a significant contribution to the overall feel of your garden. They come in a multitude of weights, materials, colours, and sizes.

Match the pot to the place; full sun will dry out clay pots quickly and overheat black coloured pots. Vary the sizes, but it's best to stick with the same material, in one or just a couple of colours.

If the pots have holes in the bottom, set them in a tray. Spill-over to the balcony below is just not neighbourly.

Unless the pots are very small, fill the bottom with a lightweight material such as popcorn Styrofoam to minimize weight and allow for drainage. Line the pots with landscape fabric and use only a soil-less mix for a growing medium. It will need to be replaced every year.

Arrange your pots together into two or three groupings and think of them as beds rather than a number of individual pots. Plant selection is simple. Most will be annuals and it's easiest to choose them after you arrive at the nursery. You'll need to know your balcony's sun and wind conditions. Plants with narrow leaves and small flower heads are less likely to blow away or become tattered by wind.

Limit your choices to just a few plants and buy several of the same ones. Then sprinkle them throughout your containers. Don't shy away from the occasional shrub or perennial, and of course, include some interesting dead stuff to help carry the garden through the winter.

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Submitted photo

When preparing a balcony garden select the right pot for the place.

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