

GREENING THE GREY

There are many ways in which you can bring planting to your surroundings. In densely populated, inner-city spaces, there are often opportunities for gardens on balconies and rooftops. The modern garden is all about using floor space, vertical space, or planters creatively. Small, urban spaces drive the need for multifunctional plants – those that hold purpose and benefit for a plethora of reasons.

PLANT YOUR OWN POLLUTION BARRIER

Whether we like it or not, sound, light, and air pollution are major issues both for the climate and our health. With air toxicity, for example, at an all-time high, especially in towns and cities, it's important that we seek solutions to reduce the damage caused by pollution. In London alone, where I live, there is an excess of 4,100 premature deaths each year due to the impacts of air pollution. But how can we help both planet and people to combat it?

One thing we all can do at home, in the office, or on the street is to incorporate more plants to combat air, noise and sight pollution. Here's what I've done to bring plants into a space to address air and sound pollution while also creating a beautiful, intimate space to enjoy. You too could achieve this by planting a pollution barrier either in a bed or up on a balcony in a pot.

CLIMBERS FOR COVER

It often shocks me just how unexplored, in design, the use of climbers is. Drainpipes, brick walls, and metal fences are just waiting to be prettified with often-scented floral vines that can bring a place to life. There are climbers for any surface and any canvas – I like to view them as plant graffiti, with colours and textures that introduce layers of interest to an otherwise

POLLUTION BARRIER IDEAS

- cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) wildlife friendly, noise reducing, pollution combating;
- elaeagnus (*Elaeagnus*) wildlife friendly, pollution combating, has edible berries;
- hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) wildlife friendly, has edible berries, slows water run-off;
- red robin (*Photinia × fraseri* 'Red Robin') wildlife friendly, noise reducing;
- tawhiwhi (*Pittosporum*) wildlife friendly, pollution combating, has fragrant flowers.

bland space. Evergreen varieties of climber are a good choice if you want to have a green screen for privacy or hide an eyesore. Overleaf, you'll find Your Guide to Climbers to help you pick.

Because climbers often need something to climb up, you could repurpose pretty much any material – wire, rope, or old trellising – to support them. However, climbers can be stronger than you expect, so before planting always consider pipes, poles, and surfaces, such as a brick wall, that might be impacted by the climber. To guide it up the surface, tie it in loosely but securely at regular intervals, using figure-of-eight knots. Never tie the stems so tightly that they are damaged as the plant grows; also avoid using sharp/rigid tying materials.

If you don't have a suitable support structure, opt for a climber that will cling onto walls, drainpipes, and most other surfaces – something like a climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea barbara*). Some climbers such as ivy (*Hedera*) are self-supporting, but they may leave marks on the surface to which they are clinging.

You can plant your climber directly into suitable soil in the ground or in a pot. Choose the size of pot based on how big you'd like your climber to grow. When growing any plant, especially on a balcony or a rooftop, check that the combined weight of the plant and container doesn't compromise any structures they might stand on.



CLIMBERS

Climbers are, by far, one of the most efficient and creative plants that can sometimes spread far over buildings, structures, and even mature trees. Their considerable qualities do make you wonder why they're

**BOUGAINVILLEA (BOUGAINVILLEA)**

This climber takes my mind straight to subtropical climates, where sun and sea are close. It's often hot pink, deep purple, or bright orange. Summer blooms may start to become more of a feature in previously colder climates, such as the UK, as temperatures start to rise.

**PASSION FLOWER (PASSIFLORA)**

This quirky and intricate vine bears the well-known, tropical passion fruits – but beware, some species have more appetizing fruits than others. The flowers alone would be a unique addition to your garden, with their funky colours and shapes in summer and autumn.

not mandatory on all vertical structures. They offer so many options to bring colour, wildlife, and edible food to otherwise bland and boring vertical spaces – plus they're not hard to grow.

**CLEMATIS (CLEMATIS)**

This beautiful flowering climber will brighten up any space, year-round. Some clematis also have additional uses: for example, the leaves and seeds of *C. ligusticifolia* were once eaten as a black-pepper substitute when black pepper was very rare and expensive.

**SWEET PEA (LATHYRUS ODORATUS)**

Although an annual climber, sweet pea is worth putting in the time and effort to plant every year. While the flowers and pods aren't edible, the blooms make fragrant and vibrant bunches that you can put in vases to lift any room in your house.

**CLIMBING HYDRANGEA (HYDRANGEA BARBARA)**

A plant that does well in partial shade is always useful to know in built-up, dense areas, where light levels can often be low because of the multitude of buildings. It flowers in summer.

**TRUMPET VINE (CAMPSIS RADICANS)**

With its unique, often peachy orange colour, the trumpet vine plays jazz to those passing by with its graceful, muted, pulled-back, instrument-like flowers from late summer. Trumpets that attract pollinators? Surely onto a winner here. Butterflies, hummingbirds, and bees all join in this symphony of nature.

**HONEYSUCKLE (LONICERA)**

This climber, which attracts many pollinators, is great for planting against a trellis, a fence, or a lightweight structure as it clings only lightly. You could also grow it up a drainpipe. Depending on the species, it can flower at any time of year.

**VINE (VITIS)**

The number of things you can do with grapes will blow your mind: from using the autumnal fruits to refresh and replenish (frozen grapes on a hot day are a personal favourite); to the Arabic and Mediterranean dishes that include grape leaves. Of course, you can also make wine with the fruits.

**JASMINE (JASMINUM OFFICINALE)**

You'll know when you pass this iconic plant as you'll be immediately drawn to its scent in summer. This is often extracted as an oil to be used in perfumes, and it epitomizes the floral notes that are now added to many beauty products.

**WISTERIA (WISTERIA)**

You know when you've walked past wisteria – you are instantly pulled in by the perfumed scent from its cascading flowers. While growing up in Notting Hill, some of my dream houses were bedecked in wisteria in late spring, when it starts to bloom.