



PLANTS FOR BALCONY GARDENS

The plant choice options for balcony gardens is literally endless, however there are a number of plants which are used more readily than others due to their reliability when grown in pots.

Balcony gardening presents a number of potential issues that need to be carefully considered before choosing which plants to purchase and use, as the environment can be more extreme than when planting into a garden bed. Such issues include higher wind, extreme heat, lower light levels due to aspect and surrounding structure, and then there is the type of pots, soil and watering regime that all play their part.

Use pots that reduce water loss such as fiberglass and plastic lightweight pots and self watering options. Clay pots can be porous and result in soil drying out more quickly. Using the best quality potting mix you can afford for potted plants as they contain water saving crystals, fertilizer and a good base of organic matter for plants health.

Be sure mulch well and water regularly. Use liquid and slow release fertilisers to ensure ongoing nutrition is supplied to your plants as potted plants can deplete the soil of its goodness quickly.

For Western facing balconies, it best to choose plants which are able to withstand higher levels of heat, such as succulents, herbaceous plants and larger specimens to help shade smaller plants. A general rule of thumb is to use plants with smaller thinner leaves, where as for heavily shaded and protected balconies use plants with larger glossy dark green leaves.

Grouping plants helps to create a stable microclimate zone around the plants, maintaining humidity, reducing water loss and protecting plants which may be more fragile to wind and direct sun.

Moving plants once a month or when required from poorly lit areas to well lit areas of the balcony to ensure that each plant gets a chance to absorb as much natural light as possible, and help maintain lush foliage and growth. Be mindful that placing plants adjacent to windows in direct sun can result in bleaching and faster moisture loss, causing damage to the plants. Air conditioning units can also be a factor in drying out the foliage and soil of the plants, so keep an eye on each plant and how they are performing in relation to where they are located.

Sansevieria lorentii – Mother In Law Tongue

A very hardy foliage plant with spectacularly patterned leaves. Thriving in warm and well-lit locations.

Keep moist in warm and dry weather, but do not overwater as they do not like wet feet. Keep much drier in winter. Apply liquid fertilizer every 3 months from Spring to Autumn to keep plants looking lush and vibrant. Cut damaged, diseased or yellowing leaves as they appear to keep plants looking their best and encourage new fresh growth.

Watering: In warmer locations, water weekly, but do not over water as plants can rot from the base



Ficus benjamina – Weeping Fig

A Great balcony plant that can create a formal feel with standard and clipped specimens being used. Caring for a ficus can be tricky however, but once you get the watering and light conditions right, they will last a long time.

The weeping fig likes consistency and looks its best when grown in bright, indirect light, but dislikes dramatic changes in temperature and light.

Watering: water bi weekly and use liquid fertilizer monthly



Zamioculcas zamiifolia – Zanzibar Gem

The Zanzibar Gem is a structural plant that is almost indestructible, unless overwatered. It has proved itself for use indoors and balconies due to its hardy nature.

Its leaves are upright on thick stalk like branches and are glossy light to dark green in colour, adding a contrast to the often square nature of balconies.



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Dracaena deremensis – Draceana

A slow growing multiple stemmed tree with arching palm like foliage. The long narrow leaves are dark green and require warmth and a well-lit position to thrive.

Keep moist but not over water. Will enjoy a liquid plant food application during the growing season to keep them healthy. Snip off dead or dying tips of the leaves or remove at the trunk to enhance their appeal. Wipe dust from leaves with a damp cloth regularly.



Aglaonema – Chinese Lucky Plant

A very hardy foliage plant with spectacularly patterned leaves. Thriving in warm poorly lit air conditioned room, these plants a great for indoor offices.

Keep moist in warm and dry weather and slightly drier in winter. Apply liquid fertilizer monthly from Spring to Autumn to keep plants looking lush and vibrant. Pluck yellowing leaves as they appear to keep plants looking their best and encourage new fresh growth. Wipe dust from leaves with a damp cloth regularly.



Spathiphyllum species

The Spathiphyllum are popular plant for use indoors and on shaded balconies. They are able to withstand low, medium and high light conditions and are great at adding good depth of colour, especially when in flower.

With dark glossy leaves, these contrast well with other plants such as the Sansevieria and the Zamioculcas plants by grouping together. Showy long lasting flowers further enhance the appeal.

Easy to tell when they need water as the leaves begin to droop.



Epipremnum aureum

The Epipremnum are very well suited for low to medium light conditions and are outstanding as a hanging basket plant or used on outdoor shelving and cabinets due to their trailing habit, they are able to cover more space.

With fresh and vibrant glossy leaves and an abundance of colour these plants will encourage people to spend more time on the balcony.

Keep moist in warm and dry weather and wipe dust from leaves with a damp cloth regularly.



Howea Forsteriana – Lord Howe Island Palm

The Lord Howe Island Palm, or Kentia Palm, is a very popular choice of palm for balconies to create a tropical look and feel. Low maintenance with a thin, slender trunk and feather-shaped, drooping fronds it looks lush and fills empty spaces well.

They are well suited to cooler climates and medium levels of lighting, so balcony spaces are great so long as they are not placed directly next to windows or sources of heat.



Rhapis excelsa – Lady Palm

The Rhapis palm is a very versatile plant native to southern China and Taiwan and has been used as a successful pot plant for many years.

Although its not best suited to high heat and dry conditions, it can tolerate low humidity and high light situations, so is best suited to a more open and well lit area.

Clustered in a groupings they give the feeling of a dense tropical garden, adding privacy and softening larger wall expanses.



Chamaedorea seifrizii – Bamboo Palm

The Chamaedorea is a small palm well suited to tropical and sub tropical climates as an under-story plant in rainforests.

They are well suited to cooler climates and medium levels of lighting, so balconies are great so long as they are not placed directly next to windows or sources of heat.

Keep well watered in high heat and dry conditions to encourage new shoots and full fronds.



Pests and Diseases of Balcony Plants

Balcony plants are not immune to garden pest and disease, and prevention is always better than cure, so keeping your plants healthy by feeding them with the right balance of moisture, nutrition and light will help to stop problems occurring.

When a problem is identified, it should be remedied immediately to reduce the chance of it spreading to your other plants. Most issues that occur are a result of over or under watering, resulting in stress to the plants and making it easier for pest or disease to take hold.

What to look for: Keep an eye out for fungal growth such as powdery mildew on the leaves, edges of leaves being eaten, sticky residue and of course evidence of flying insects.

Before resorting to harsh chemicals to control pests, try to remove insects by wiping them off with a damp cloth or with soapy water. If that doesn't work, neem oil insecticide is an organic solution for eliminating many common house plant pests. It even controls some types of fungus on plants

A Greener View Gardens is a Sydney based horticultural service offering packaged indoor and balcony gardens, garden design and consultancy, professional landscape and garden maintenance services

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