



A wall of flower power. COURTESY DENIS FLANAGAN

Martin's spring gardening tips

- **Location, location, location.** Against the balcony rail is better for plants than against the building wall, for the wind, for dryness and for the sun.
- **Play it safe.** Use your head when attaching things to your balcony. And keep stuff tied down from the wind. Also, check with your condo bylaws first, because not all buildings will let you do the same thing with hanging plants.
- **Bigger is better.** The smaller the pot, the more it's going to dry out because of the sun and the wind. Bigger pots equal better success, and if you put a spring plant in a bigger pot, it's more likely to survive the cold.

A miniature backyard on your balcony

Condo trends. Metro talks to two gardening experts about what and when to garden vertically this spring

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You don't need a backyard to have a garden

Take advantage of your cubic footage, not just your square footage, and add colour and zest to your outdoor condo space. You can learn how to transform balconies, railings and wall spaces into green space with innovative new products like space-saving stacked planters and stylish containers.

Teacher, designer and consultant, Denis Flanagan combines 30 years of experience with a unique style that has made him a popular speaker at events across the country. The host of HGTV's *Indoor Gardener* and *One Garden Two Looks*, Flanagan says that vertical gardening is very trendy right now.

"Most people have limited space on condo balconies or terraces and using things like trellises, like obelisks, like hanging plants, will optimize the amount of space that

you've got," he advises.

Where can you get all this stuff? "Just local garden centres," says Flanagan. "Local hardware stores and I guess in today's age, the first place to start is on the Internet, at least to get some ideas of the looks, the fashions, the colours of things that you would want."

You may be wondering if it's too early to put plants out now, but Flanagan says you can certainly start setting your containers out.

"I would really encourage people to get ahead of things and get the containers, get the supports, get the soil and if it's a perennial style of vine like a clematis or climbing rose, that you can start doing about mid-April."

"If we're talking annual vines like sweet peas and bougainvillea, jasmine, those types of things; that's more toward the mid to the end of May depending on where you live and depending how sheltered your balcony is."

Denis will be speaking at the upcoming International Home and Garden Show at Toronto's International Centre on April 15. "I'll be certainly referring to what can be done that week in the garden."

We asked Elaine Martin just what is vertical gardening?

"Any plants that grow tall, maybe up a trellis, or up an obelisk or a standard. Anything

From 27 acres to the 27th floor

"I spent 20 years gardening on 27 acres on Hockley Valley, so I've gone from 27 acres to the 27th floor on Yonge and Bloor, which is a bit of a culture shock."

Elaine Martin, From The Potting Shed

that gives you height or a visual perspective that's going in a vertical direction, is called vertical gardening," explains Martin who is the proprietor of three From the Potting Shed gardening stores across Ontario.

Most importantly, says Martin, "You need to think about what direction you face, because you're going to have to put different plants. North, you're going to do shade gardening and east, you have the morning light. South and west are a real issue because it's full of blaring sun all day and you don't have any dappled light unless you create it — you create your own microclimate."

And the higher you get, you also have issues with the wind and you also have issues with dryness because the rain doesn't get to your little plants; you're the rain. You've got to water them."



Feel like climbing the walls of your tiny condo? Let your plants do that instead. COURTESY DENIS FLANAGAN