

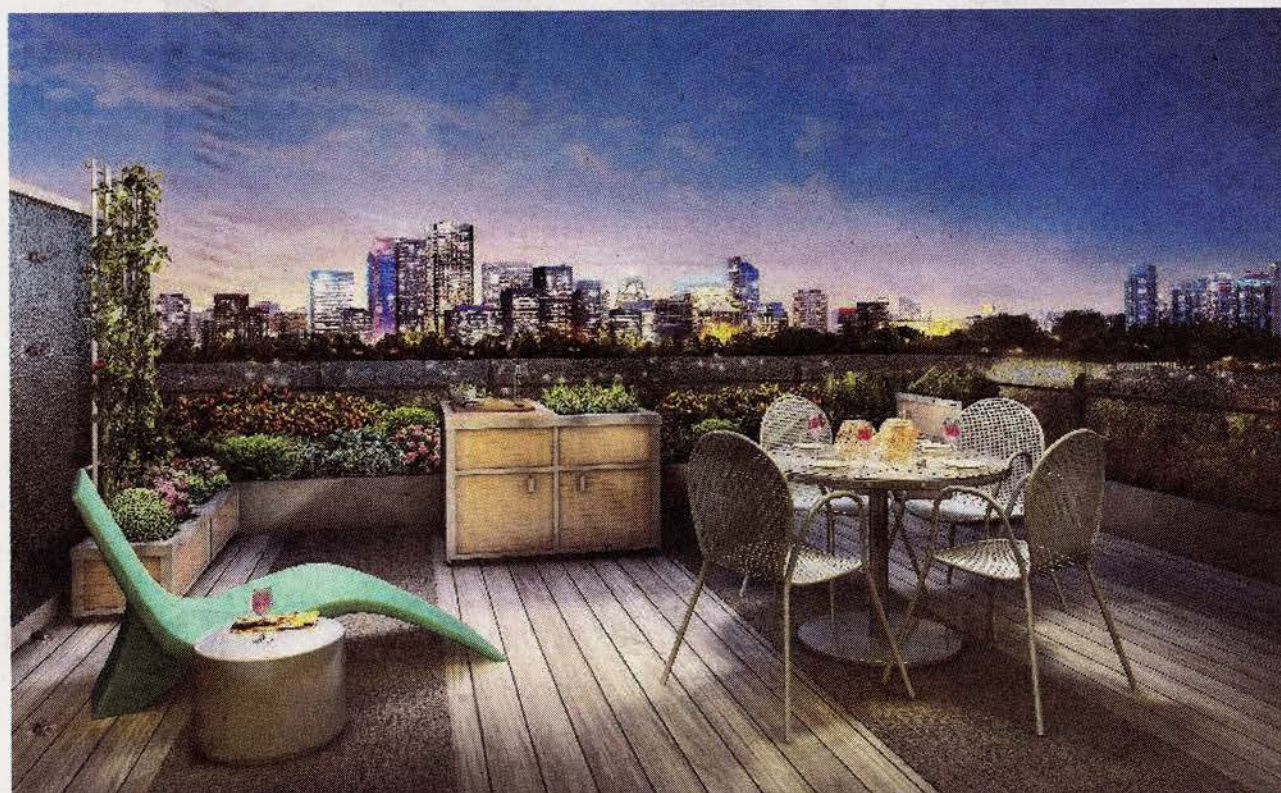
# CONDO LIVING

## TRENDS

# Landscaping in the sky



Far beyond the standard concrete slab, glass and rail balconies of most condos, new design concepts feature convenient, low-maintenance outdoor gardens that can be enjoyed year-round.



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**DUNCAN MCALLISTER**  
Special to QMI Agency

For those urban condo dwellers who may not always be able to escape the sizzling city heat for a summer getaway, Reserve Properties may have the answer.

At their 109OZ condominiums on Ossington Ave., near Queen St. W., they've come up with two innovative condo balcony themes and have enlisted the help of two of Toronto's foremost landscape architects to do it.

With their combined experience in green roofs and award-winning urban designs, landscape designers Scott Torrance and David Leinster help to endure your staycation in the city. Far beyond the standard concrete slab, glass and rail balconies that are largely underutilized by condo owners, these concepts feature convenient, low-maintenance outdoor gardens that you can enjoy year-round.

With features one would not expect in a downtown condo like wood dock flooring and a daybed with outdoor mattress, these designs transform a limited and oft-neglected space into a flexible and functional living area that maximizes a very valuable asset.

Sit back and dream of the setting sun reflecting off the ripples of a great northern lake. You can almost hear the loons calling. Known for his work on Toronto's award-winning Sugar Beach, Leinster's Muskoka Cottage Escape offers a rustic green retreat at home.

"It was really inspired by the idea that the smaller urban spaces are a type of urban getaway," he says. "I think for a lot of people who live in Ontario the notion of the cottage is something that is part of being Canadian, especially in Ontario with the lake country."

Teak stools and tables provide impromptu seating and moveable LED lamps and an element grill are surrounded by a variety of hardy plants. "Cottages tend not to be urban chic quite, it's a look of things

being a little temporary as well, kind of loungey, a very relaxed aesthetic as opposed to something that's more formal."

There's a low planter that runs along the edge of the balcony that's clad in granite, reminiscent of the Canadian Shield. "As a sort of memory, we're referencing the materials of the Muskokas," Leinster explains.

Alternately, the Al Fresco Kitchen Garden was inspired by Torrance's award-winning green roof design for ESRI Canada's Garden in the Sky. It features a sleek modular system of cedar planters for growing herbs, and doubles as an outdoor cooking preparation area and a storage unit.

Torrance addresses some of the challenges of working in a small residential balcony space. Green roofs are conventionally designed with drought-tolerant plants and a very lightweight soil medium as balconies have limited loading in terms of weight.

Flexibility and multiuse is key in the 109OZ design where the whole green roof can actually be moved. "It's on wheels so you kind of move it around to suit your particular balcony. Use it as bit of a divider, it helps to form a space for an intimate evening dinner or something like that," says Torrance.

The inviting condo balcony design accommodates accessories like a boulevard round table with bistro-style café chairs, a quick-dry green Chill lounge chair and a contemporary stainless steel trellis for climbing flowering plants.

We all love fresh food, says Torrance, and even in a small space you can grow herbs like chives, basil and oregano. "You can grow some strawberries, lettuce is very easy to grow in a very shallow amount of soil. You can have fresh lettuce all season long."

The modular planter has various uses: "We created these things to really be multifunctional; they can be space dividers that could be a place to grow vegetables, as well they have doors on them so you can actually store cushions or utensils or things like that."