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Growers arm themselves with new information on DIY green wall projects

Living in urban environments can make it challenging for Aussies to engage in traditional gardening projects. A new suite of resources is now available, exploring how green walls and other vertical gardens could be used by the community to increase greenspace in the urban environment.

Led by the University of Technology Sydney, the 'DIY laneway greening – simplifying vertical greening at a community level' project saw the development of a website and eBook that seeks to empower and engage people to put green walls in their local community or residences.

Dubbed "It's Time to Grow Up", this project was funded through the Hort Frontiers Green Cities Fund, an initiative that invests in long-term research that helps to drive a measurable increase in urban green space. It is managed by Hort Innovation with funding from the Australian Government and contributions from public and private institutions.

It's a resource that will be of great importance to growers like David Rose from Sydney Wildflower Nursery.



Dr Peter Irga, University of Technology Sydney

Primarily operating a retail business of approximately 1,800 to 2,000 square meters in a residential area, Mr Rose's Sydney Wildflower Nursery also has a production nursery where they grow approximately 10 per cent of its retail stock.

Owner, David Rose, said there is a clear need and associated benefits for increasing the amount of plants in urban areas, and green walls could be a great opportunity to do it.

Operating in Heathcote, on the outskirts of suburban Sydney and in touching distance of the Royal National Park, vertical gardening is not something that the business has had much experience with.

But as urban sprawl continues and the size of gardens shrinks even in outer suburbia, Mr Rose is

finding himself having more and more conversations about green walls.

"It's common now for customers to come in and tell us about green wall projects they are working on and though we're not a specialist in green walls, we have the knowledge and expertise to provide plant advice for natives that have a great chance of thriving in a particular environment and geographic region," said Mr Rose.

"In the future, with the creation of the 'It's Time to Grow Up' resources, I will be able to point customers towards a simple, user friendly resource that will help them be successful vertical gardeners. And of course, successful gardeners are more likely to grow more plants."

It's also a type of greening project that the business says will have a real, tangible positive impact.

"In addition to the proven health and wellbeing benefits associated with greenlife, vertical greening technology can boost biodiversity, facilitate air quality improvements, provide thermal insulation, reduce energy costs and reduce noise by limiting the noise coming into and off a building," Mr Rose said.



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Sydney Wildflower Nursery is one of several nurseries which helped consult on the project. Project lead and Chancellor's Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Dr Peter Irga, University of Technology Sydney, said that the aim of this research was to engage primarily with consumers and encourage the greater establishment of green walls in urban areas.

"To achieve this, we need to be presenting accessible and simple ways that consumers can successfully deploy greenspace in urban environments," Dr Irga said.

"We wanted to engage people to establish green walls in their residences on smaller scales. Technical resources do already exist for large scale green walls but there was a gap for smaller DIY projects."

Through consultation with seven community gardening groups, the project team designed eight different green wall systems that could be applied to outdoor spaces, providing a how-to-guide and rating system for each to help consumers evaluate and determine what will work best for them, and further encourage consumers to integrate green infrastructure in their space.

"This rating system was based on the cost, maintenance, integration, draining and irrigation, and how DIY friendly each system is. Our team aimed to make the information and guides simple and easy to

digest for your average consumer, as we knew that putting too much technical information into guide would be intimidating for those looking to put together a green wall," Dr Irga said.

Through this project, engineers, architects, and botanists were engaged to provide research insights to try to verify and validate the technology in a way that makes economic sense for uptake. Councils across Australia were also engaged to assist in gaining a greater understanding of associated legal requirements with building green walls.

"Both through consultation and research, our team explored various plant species to identify those that would be most effective in a DIY system and in the Australian climate," Dr Irga said.

"Engagement from nursery businesses through research and development phases was pivotal in obtaining information on plant selection for the eBook, particularly with the background knowledge in Australian native plants."

With more people living in smaller apartments and homes, Mr Rose thinks this sort of research has potential to encourage people in confined spaces to establish greater green space and benefit consumers everyday living.

"Through projects such as this we'll be able to work towards building greener, more liveable cities," Mr Rose said.

"A simple, easy to understand DIY guide that helps communities and consumers establish their own green walls, is certainly a resource I'd promote and share with customers looking to give it a go at home.

"By empowering communities and consumers to establish vertical greening, there's an opportunity for nurseries to increase stock purchases from a more diverse, engaged customer base."

Access the website and eBook, at: itstimetogrowup.com.au

To watch the video, click [here](#).

The Australian nursery industry is behind a suite of pioneering research projects. To learn more about the Hort Frontiers Green Cities Fund, click [here](#).



David Rose, Sydney Wildflower Nursery