

Giardina 2017 – The balcony trends

Life on the balcony

Urban balconies, small patio and miniature gardens are transforming more and more into oases of green. The trend of urban gardening and urban farming also continues unabated. At Giardina 2017, experts will demonstrate how limited outdoor spaces can be designed in a sophisticated way and enjoyed the whole year round. In a special themed section, visitors will find inspiration, plants, products and accessories which turn even the smallest spaces into an ideal place to relax and harvest the fruits of one's labour. The biggest international indoor "live your garden" event will take place from 15 to 19 March at the Messe Zurich exhibition centre.

The oasis of green should be well planned

Kathrin Stengele of Fior di Terrazza is specialised in the design of balcony gardens and small patios. Her tips on a lively and green outdoor space: "Think about how you would like to use your terrace and how much time you can devote to caring for the plants. Select, perhaps, a theme and implement it with furniture, accessories and colours. The planting ideally comprises evergreen woody plants, flowering shrubs, grasses and perennials. This basis can be complemented with spring and seasonal flowers as the mood takes you. I also advise that you invest in high-quality planters, encircling them with lightweight folding furniture. Why not place a colourful carpet prepared specially for the balcony on the ground? Create a connection between the inside and the outside and shift the centre of your family life outdoors in fine weather."

Quinoa and Co. from your own balcony garden

The trend towards balcony gardening is continuing unabated: urban people want to harvest and enjoy what they have planted themselves. Planted in mini raised garden beds from Hochbeet Sager or in colourful, trendy plant sacks made of fabric and felt from sackgesund.ch, salads and herbs, cherry tomatoes and radishes can be planted from bio seeds and seedlings, even on a balcony just eight square metres in size. Gertrud Ongania from Veg and the City says: "Decorative food crops which you don't believe would live in a flowerpot, such as quinoa, small corn with violet cobs and the highly popular kale are currently experiencing a boom. Combinations that are as varied as possible in a small area are in demand – and they really succeed with basic knowledge and good advice", says Ongania, who is specialised in organic gardening in the city. With innovative products from manufactories like WormUp or Wildbiene + Partner, you're also making a contribution to biodiversity. While wild bees also pollinate the flowers on adjacent balconies, worms process the bio-waste that is generated in the decorative composting containers from WormUp – and in a completely odourless manner. At Giardina 2017, visitors can find inspiration in the current urban gardening trends and directly buy products for their own garden oasis.

Plants: with character please

The essential element to create a natural atmosphere on balconies and patios is plants with character, says Patrick Daepp from the garden centre Gartenpflanzen Daepp in Münsingen BE. “The seasons can be experienced in all their intensity with ornamental shrubs that blossom and show beautiful colours in the fall,” says the professional grower, who runs the largest tree nursery with a great selection on the Swiss plateau. The Gärtnerei Schwitter offers exotic ornamental shrubs: hornbeams, Ginkgo trees and Japanese maples work like living parasols and provide natural shade, not only in gardens but also on balconies and patios. “Japanese maple trees live in four seasons”, Roman Schwitter explains: “In the winter the focus is on their artistic structure, in spring their vibrant budding in light green or orange, in summer beautiful leaves, and in the fall their luminous colouring from yellow to copper red”, says the shrub specialist from Inwil in the canton of Lucerne.

Plant and flower pots: the new stars

These days you can choose among plant pots from a wide range of materials. Individual woody plants are shown off to best effect in a perfectly matching pot. Warm copper tones lend the outside space a touch of glamour, in the past usually brought about only with sophisticated home accessories. Manufactories like Metallico are transposing the trend and, besides traditional metal pots, also offer variants in brass, copper and gold. If you like industrial chic, you'll select the pots made of fibre cement from Eternit that stand out because of their timeless design. They are 100% recyclable, breathable and regulate moisture. Wooden pots immediately create a warm, natural-feeling atmosphere. You will find beautiful wooden pots in all sizes at Holzbau Wirth.

Garden furniture: vintage and retro chic

The current furnishing trends in the living space are also flowing into the design of outdoor space. Vintage furniture and household articles with heirloom character and the materials mix of wood and metal lend balconies and patios a warm, cosy ambiance. Altrimenti, for instance, gives old garden furniture a fresh coat of paint, breathing new life into it. The expert Andreas Schedler from Hauenstein AG discerns a certain garden nostalgia: “Garden objects from the past, for instance objects made of zinc or everyday items made of vintage wood, remind us of simple country life in earlier days. Antique zinc tubs are planted with a range of culinary herbs, even if the balcony is in the middle of the city. Robust perennials rich in flowers ensure a natural look; they're more popular than little summer flowers these days”, Andreas Schedler explains.

Wood: both a standard and an all-rounder

The basic element wood is more sought after for designing balconies and patios than ever. It makes life in the open air even cosier. The unique nature of the grain of each wooden element makes any wooden object unique. The on-going hype can no doubt also be explained by the aura of warmth and the feeling of closeness to nature that are associated with design elements made of wood. A floor grid made to measure absorbs the heat in the summer, protecting your feet; in the winter, wood gives off heat and helps prevent frost damage to attractive potted plants. “Even for a mini-balcony of just 1 x 1 metres, a suitable wooden grid can be produced”, says H.R. Baumann, the operations manager at Baumann & Helbling in Gebertingen.

“The sustainably grown Accoya wood that we are processing is knot-free and remains splinter-free even after it has been used for years.” The patio specialists also design, if needed, soundproofing or visual protection – and the troublesome planning application is also part of the service package.

Here is an overview of the exhibitors mentioned above:

- altrimenti, Flurlingen
- Baumann & Helbling, Gebertingen
- Erlebnisgärtnerei Gartenpflanzen Daepp, Münsingen
- Eternit, Niederurnen
- Fior di Terrazza, Bern
- Gärtnerei Schwitter, Inwil
- Hauenstein AG, Baar/Rafz/Zurich
- Hochbeet Sager, Gontenbad
- Metallico, Littau
- Sackgsund.ch, Neukirch-Egnach
- Veg and the City, Zurich
- Wildbiene + Partner, Zurich
- WormUp, Zurich

Giardina – Europe's highest-quality indoor 'live your garden' event

This unique exhibition heralds in the season in a dazzling fashion at the start of spring each year. The most important suppliers from the sector present new products, creative solutions and upcoming trends in garden design on an area of some 30,000 m². Amidst spectacular sample gardens and artistic installations, visitors will find a wealth of inspiration and ideas for their personal world of flowers and plants in the garden or on their terrace or balcony.

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