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URBAN ESCAPE » CREATE YOUR OWN ROOFTOP GARDEN SANCTUARY



raise the roof

Take inspiration from a Melbourne skyscraper that reaches new heights with an innovative rooftop garden. This tranquil escape is designed for entertaining, relaxing and simply admiring nature's vivid palette

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garden seat tips

- ★ Weathered timber adds an easy care element to the space, only needing the occasional oiling.
- ★ Flowering shrubs behind the benches add colour and build on the feeling of intimacy.
- ★ The vines climbing up the wires will create a green wall for structure and shading.

“It’s wonderful that people looking down from the windows can appreciate the garden, too” Amanda Black, part owner

1. SEATING OPTIONS Made from recycled wharf board and topped with mosaics made from salvaged tiles, the benches in this rooftop oasis get a big work out. The roof – once bare, black tar – is now a thriving place for the building’s employees to get their green fix. The bench timber had to be lightweight and tough, not just good looking. “I love how the tonal variance adds warmth and depth,” says architect Merran Porjazoski of Bent Architecture.

2. HIGHER GROUND The benches and hill of succulents are the perfect height to create intimate spaces for people when they are seated. “Yet, they’re low enough for people to see the entire space when standing,” says Merran. To get the elevation, the hill was packed with recycled polystyrene and planted with hardy succulents that need little soil and survive on rainfall alone now that they are established.

3. SCULPTURAL BEAUTY A creation of sculptor Caleb Shea, the steel structure frames views of the city and features washers that will train the wisteria. “Originally, we wanted a tree for height and shade, but couldn’t afford the weight,” explains Amanda Black, part owner and building manager. Wrangling the weight load was difficult but worth it. “It’s wonderful that people looking down from the windows can appreciate the garden and realise something like this is possible.”

4. FRUITFUL ENDEAVOUR This urban escape is used a lot for entertaining, so shade is important. In time, the passionfruit vine will trail up the wires to provide shade (and fruit!) near the barbecue areas. Meanwhile, the lime trees behind will “soon supply limes for Friday afternoon cosmopolitans,” says Amanda. “We love that all the productive plants, like the olives, lemons, tomatoes, herbs and strawberries are thriving on captured rainwater.”

5. GRASS ROOTS The native grasses add softness and texture. In the quiet times, the gentle rustle is a subtle reminder of big open fields. “It’s wonderful to have this open space so readily available,” says Amanda. “Sometimes, we come here on the weekends, too, just to sit, read the paper and potter in the garden.” ❖

This garden was funded by the ‘Growing Up’ competition, an initiative by the Committee for Melbourne’s Future Focus Group. Bent Architecture designed this winning entry, visit growingup.org.au for information. For more details of Merran’s work, visit bentarchitecture.com.au.

This Melbourne rooftop garden (opposite) offers an escape from the rigours of a working day. A selection of hardy plants (top right), including *Sedum pachyphyllum* (bottom right), creates a veritable carpet of garden colour.