Grow Resilience with Vertical Gardening



Resilience is a quality that helps you work through challenging times. When you encounter obstacles, resilient individuals are able to persevere and seek solutions. Resilience can be developed by breaking challenging tasks into smaller, manageable steps, maintaining a hopeful outlook, finding purpose with your daily activities, helping others and practicing mindfulness. Resilience can be developed in the garden through many projects but designing a vertical garden is the one we will focus on for this Mental Health Monday.

Vertical gardening is not a new concept and there are many ways to do it, including DIY designs. Some vertical garden designs are attractive on Pinterest or Tik Tok, but are not practical for supporting plant health. The benefits often touted for vertical gardening include increase yield and fewer plant diseases. While this can be true, it is largely based on the functionality of the design. Here are some guidelines for creating a successful vertical garden.



- Meet the plants' needs. Plants in a vertical garden are likely going to all experience the same growing conditions. Mixing shade and sun plants or plants that need dry conditions with those that need regular water will result in poor growth.
- Use containers that are the right size for the plant. Small containers will dry out quickly in direct sunlight and may require watering multiple times a day.



- Soil can become heavy when wet. If you are hanging containers on a wall, be sure the weight will be supported when you water the plants.
- Follow spacing recommendations to allow adequate air circulation.
- Recycled plastic containers can be used for growing plants, but remember to add drainage holes. Some containers will heat the soil up too much if placed in direct sunlight throughout the day.
- Consider wind exposure and how well supported the vertical garden needs to be to withstand the amount of wind that area receives.
- Monitor the weight of the plants growing on vertical structures. Gourds and squash fruits can become heavy and may require additional support.

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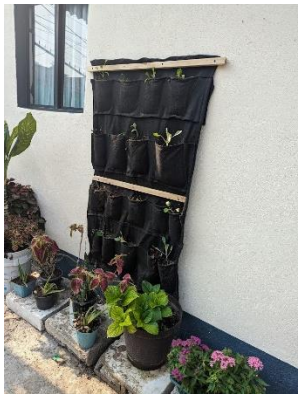
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A vertical garden can be created simply by growing cucumbers up a trellis instead of sprawling on the ground. You could design a vertical system using multiple containers attached to a wall or make a pocket planter out of weed fabric or a shoe organizer. Another popular vertical garden design is using rain gutters to grow strawberries or leafy greens. Recently I even saw tires hanging with plants growing inside. The possibilities and the benefits are endless.



Vertical gardens can solve a problem of limited gardening space while providing beauty. They can make watering and harvesting easier by raising the plants off the ground level. Creative thinking and problem solving are fulfilling ways to develop resilience and improve mental health and well-being.

Don't forget to send pictures of your vertical gardens to Cynthia at cdom@ksu.edu.

Cynthia Domenghini, Horticulture Extension Specialist

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