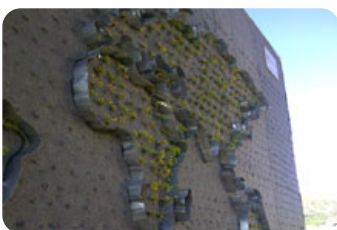


Tractor Outdoor erects first sponsored vertical garden in South Africa

Tractor Outdoor prides itself in delivering unique innovative solutions for our clients. "We have admired the work of French Vertical Garden Supremo Patrick Blanc for many years," says Simc Wall of Tractor Outdoor, "and we had been looking at ways to erect similar gardens in Cape Town. Emirates Airlines through their media agency Starcom Mediavest/Nu-Venture and their creative agency, Draffcb, embraced the innovative opportunity and immediately committed to working with us to make our vision a reality."

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Taking inspiration from the early vertical garden installations in Europe and our own abundant indigenous vegetation, it's easy to see the enormous benefits of a vertical garden to both private and commercial spaces. In cities where space is at a premium, initial briefs to landscapers are often to make the most of a limited space, to screen off unsightly walls or add another texture. Vertical gardens respond to these challenges beautifully.

Tractor Outdoor commenced planning of this vertical garden in Kloof Street in early April this year. The plants have been grown in a biodynamic felt specially imported from a supplier in Germany, and a fully integrated hydroponic drip irrigation system has been installed behind the felt which is linked to a moisture sensor which waters and naturally fertilises the plants as and when it is required. The garden is 6m high by 12m wide and is made up entirely of wood and vegetation.

"This is a first for South Africa," says Wall, "with this concept we are able to convert normal dreary bland blank facades into green, breathing spaces, we do not have to rely on traditional soil growing methods and can effectively brighten and bring life to any wall, anywhere."

Challenged by a limited number of suitable locations and a Municipality that is seen as slow to back innovation and support business, Tractor persevered and pushed ahead with this project.

This project also supports Cape Town's bid for World Design Capital 2014 by actively integrating art and public private spaces. We encourage other equally committed Capetonians to get involved in supporting the bid and making Cape Town a more creative and innovative city to live in. By careful design and the 20 years of experience of the landscape team meant that many of the potential challenges to growing a vertical garden of this size were dealt with at species selection stage.

"For the vertical garden in Kloof Street, we have opted for a hybrid succulent - a Graptoveria variety - to cover the sea and ocean spaces because of its aqua-like colour, hardiness and impressive growth rate. The continents have been planted with Aptenia Cordifolia also a succulent for the sunny north west facing position," says Nicholas Whitehorn, Tractor Outdoor's landscaping consultant.

"Like any garden, a vertical garden can take on any theme or design. For example, using an abundance of fynbos and indigenous varieties would translate into a natural tapestry. Using less planting varieties in shape and patterns, one could achieve a more contemporary design. Even a subtropical and lush look is achievable in the correct environment including indoors. Walls can be planted with beautiful yet functional herbs and vegetables, like multicoloured and textured lettuces, rockets and mints for restaurants and the home cook."

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