

Worldwide Trend Towards Living Green Walls



There is a worldwide trend towards installing living green walls in buildings and homes. It is a way to enhance the building's visual appearance, improve air quality and provide a work or home-friendly environment. People are becoming increasingly attracted to green areas. Businesses and large retailers, such as the multi-story La Fayette departmental store in Paris, are making use of using living foliage on their walls.

South Africa is following this trend and a number of homes and buildings are benefiting from these green walls. "Homes are using them to add more greenery while businesses and buildings are adding them for aesthetics and health reasons. The walls provide a welcome change to traditional partitioning and artwork we see in buildings and malls," says Ricardo Da Nova, a director of Green Hive, a South African company that designs and installs living walls.

The walls, also known as vertical gardens, transform interiors with life-renewing greenery and offer an aesthetically-pleasing environment that can improve employee health and morale. Whether the walls are installed on the exterior or interior of a building, the structures of living, breathing plant life creates an environment that can add numerous benefits.

Mr Da Nova says that plants in walls can act as a natural air-filtration system for the building occupants. Employees are exposed to an environment with lush plants and benefit from the effects of the healthy foliage. The same applies to homes. The construction and operation of the building aims to promote a healthy environment and not disrupt the land, water, resources and energy in and around the building.

These vertically sprawling gardens are beginning to be part of the architecture worldwide on the exteriors and interiors of skyscrapers, hotel receptions areas, offices receptions and homes. "The walls become natural air-filters, creating a cleaner and safer work environment. Office workers are often exposed to air toxins. Living walls can metabolise harmful toxins, releasing oxygen into the workplace air, much like office plants but on a much larger scale."



"Interior and exterior living walls cool the air in summer and insulate the building in winter, reducing energy costs. Exterior living green walls can reduce wall surface temperatures by as much as 10 degrees °C, resulting in significant energy and air conditioning savings," says Mr Da Nova.

Living walls can also reduce noise levels. The vegetation can block noise with the foliage acting as additional insulation. Noise levels are further reduced by the structure reflecting as well as absorbing acoustic energy.

