

— go earthy —

Under **THREAT**



Take the cat off the list

The facts: This medium-sized cat and a skilful swimmer, is found mainly in wetland habitats. Over 45 per cent of the protected wetlands in Southeast Asia are considered threatened, including those that are home to this species.

The threat: The Fishing Cat (*Prionailurus viverrinus*) has changed its category from “vulnerable” to “endangered” because of the severe pressure on its habitat. Threats to the Fishing Cat include human settlement, in addition to the rapid clearance of coastal mangroves over the past decade, depletion of fish stocks from over-fishing — the cat relies heavily on fish for its survival. Listed as “endangered” on the IUCN Red List, the Fishing Cat faces the threat of extinction in the wild.

What is being done: To reverse rapidly declining numbers WWF-India is working to conserve wetland habitats. The prevention of indiscriminate trapping, snaring and poisoning is also needed. But, stronger conservation efforts are needed and awareness drives must be put in place on an emergency basis if this animal is to survive.

GO UP IN GREEN

A vertical garden can fit just about anywhere and be grown by anyone. Recommended in highly-populated areas where space is limited, it's the new eco-friendly gardening mantra of 2011

JYOTI VERMA

DECCAN CHRONICLE

The poet William Wordsworth once said: “A garden is a lovable thing.” Well, he would have thought he had died and gone to heaven if he saw one of these babies! Yes, we are talking of vertical gardens. Mukesh Ambani has one, many five star deluxe hotels have them, Chennai’s Botanical Garden has the Green Wall, New Delhi’s Mughal Gardens has one and you can have one too.

Global gardening experts swear by vertical gardens which are essentially green patches that grow upwards and take a minimal amount of space, fit on patios, decks and even rooftops.

And it’s not as complex as it sounds. You can create a vertical garden with climbing plants, with the help of trellises or plants that will hang down from a high-placed planter (call it a flowerpot). Other, slightly more time-consuming methods are tiered or raised garden beds, planters or shelves. This type of gardening is already becoming very popular in highly-populated areas where space is limited. In return, the gardens offer aesthetic value, better indoor air quality, thermal insulation and the freedom to grow anything you want.

“With rising food prices, food shortages, genetically modified crops and the use of toxic pesticides and synthetic fertilisers, more and more people want to take control over what they eat. For folks living in tight spaces, creativity and using methods to maximise their growing space is required. There are so many options of growing vertically that most people are employing some of these,” says

Rachael Ross of Urban Garden Solutions, a Renton, US-based organisation which works in urban gardening solutions.

For those who are keen to join the club, keep in mind that the idea is to have something inexpensive and easy to maintain. You can use existing walls, deck rails and overhangs for planters. You can also invest in a few trellises for the plants to climb. Even tiered, raised garden beds are relatively inexpensive, say experts.

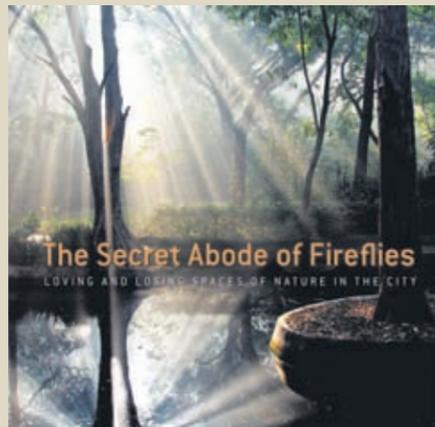
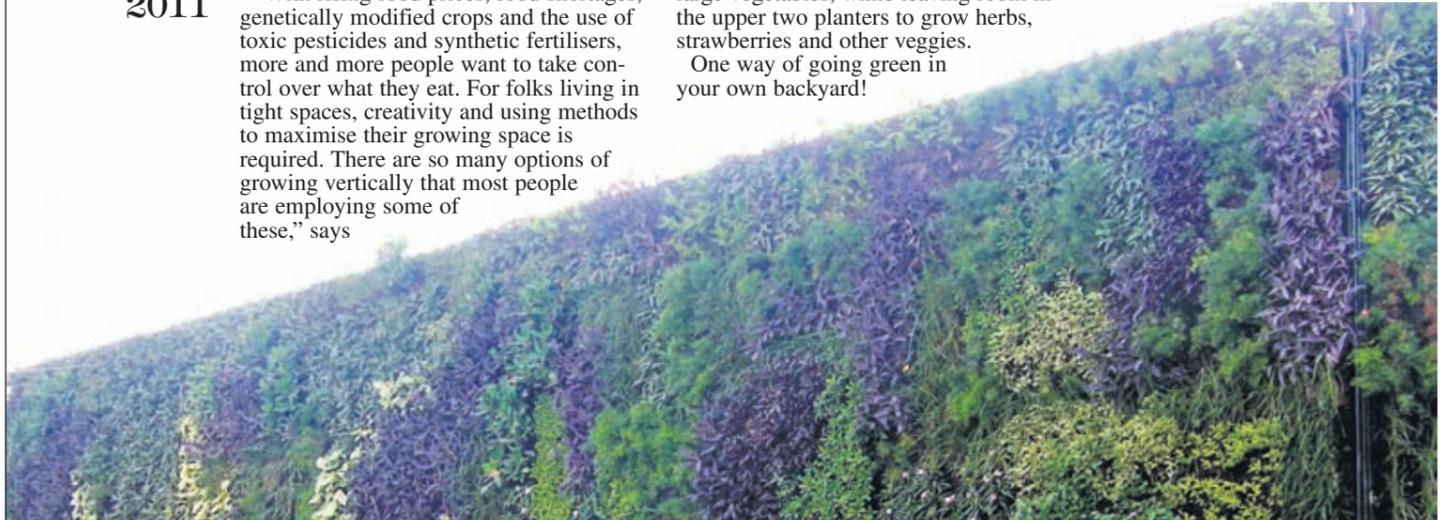
“Ample ventilation but not too much wind, direct sunlight in the morning or evening for two to three hours, water, timely maintenance and oodles of passion is what a gardener needs to have,” says Pradeep Barpande, owner, ELT India Enterprise, a Pune-based venture into living walls and sustainable light-weight roof garden systems. “Green walls cost anywhere between ₹1,700 and ₹2,200 depending on the type of mounting, size and plant cost,” he adds.

Catering currently to Pune, Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bengaluru and Surat, Barpande gets requests for vertical gardens from all corners of the country.

And here’s a new format! The five foot, MonkeyPots Perfect Patio Planter, invented by Southern California entrepreneur Suzy Weast, is a vertical three-tiered planter that grows tomatoes and other large vegetables, while leaving room in the upper two planters to grow herbs, strawberries and other veggies.

One way of going green in your own backyard!

VERTICAL GARDENS ARE ONE WAY OF GOING GREEN IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD



Save the trees and preserve the future

RAI UMRAOPATI RAY

DECCAN CHRONICLE



What better way to protest about the felling of trees than to edit a book about it! Yes, Nanni Singh has done just that. Her NGO Youthreach initiated a successful campaign when trees were being cut down to lay down the BRT corridor in Delhi, voicing the importance of trees in urban life.

Change **MAKERS**

So, the lady did have some first-hand experience when she took on the editing of *The Secret Abode of Fireflies. Loving and Losing Spaces of Nature in the City*. The book is a tribute to and celebration of trees and the rare urban wildernesses in India. Like her NGO that creates awareness on social and ecological issues to inculcate a culture that is rooted in self reflection, sensitivity and participation, the book brings out the essence of nature

and its diminishing connection with today’s urban structures.

“It’s about finding a way to reconnect with trees, their beauty and wisdom, their flowers and fragrance. Of uncovering and touching the truth about how trees and spaces of nature have been an incredibly intrinsic part of our culture and life,” says Singh. “In the changing relationship between man and nature in modernity, we are fast losing the very essence of our lives through this diminishing connection to our wild and natural spaces in the city,” she says.