

# Seeking to Grow Enthusiasm for Balcony Gardening

BY JUSTINE COOKE

Summer is upon us and it's time to transform that barren balcony into an urban oasis. Is your balcony currently a concrete wasteland punctuated by empty pots? Maybe you want to extend your living space outdoors but aren't sure how to get started, or you're just looking for inspiration to germinate your own ideas.

The folks at *Toronto Balconies Bloom* want to help Toronto's balconies to blossom. With a newly launched website, this volunteer project hopes to inspire, inform and help grow a broad community of balcony garden enthusiasts.

## Inspiring Ideas

The *Toronto Balconies Bloom* website is designed to nurture your horticultural instincts. Photos and stories of local balcony gardens include helpful information, such as the direction the blogger's balcony faces and the growing conditions on it so you can compare them with your own.



Even if your ambitions don't extend beyond a couple of pots of geraniums, you'll appreciate the spectacular Landscape Ontario award-winning balcony gardens.

If you have inspiring photos and tales of your own balcony garden, the site organizers urge you to send them in for inclusion into their growing gallery.

## Informing Tips and Expert Links

The *Toronto Balconies Bloom* website is a hub, providing helpful links and

contact info to the greenest thumbs in Toronto. A quick perusal of the Toronto Master Gardeners Fact Sheet on Container Gardening is a good primer for your trip to the nursery. Find out about the Master Gardeners Q&A online or telephone services. Groups can book a Master Gardener for a free on-site seminar.

Check out the down-to-earth but stylish *You Grow Girl* website, where laid-back urban gardeners can learn how to over-winter a red pepper or transform an ugly plastic container into something worthy of all their gardening efforts.

Does your balcony face north or south? Local gardener Louise Warner gives tips about which easy and decorative annuals to choose, based on whether your balcony gets a lot or a little sunlight. (Here's one: leaf lettuce makes a beautiful and edible container plant!)

And don't forget to watch for gardening-related incentives from the retail supporters of the project.

## Growing Community – Demonstration projects

*Toronto Balconies Bloom* will showcase a variety of balcony gardening projects across the city with the goal of sharing inspiring and educational experiences. A group of any size will qualify – friends, neighbours or communities – any group that wants to garden balconies gather together to share collective wisdom and wacky or wonderful experiences.

*Toronto Balconies Bloom* invites you to join the growing ranks of gardeners who are getting down and dirty in the city. It's a fun and affordable way to expand and beautify your living space.

*Justine Cooke is a Toronto-based writer currently plotting her own balancy garden. ■*



Check out the *Toronto Balconies Bloom* website at  
[www.torontobalconiesbloom.ca!](http://www.torontobalconiesbloom.ca!)