



Pamela Crawford's Living Walls

“ While landscaping 1500 homes - including the outdoor living areas - I ran into a lot of blank walls that needed beauty. I thought of them as blank canvasses ready for a beautiful creation But the availability of products for outdoor walls is minimal.

I developed my Living Wall Planters for Kinsman Company because of this need. They are designed for outdoor walls and are an incredibly versatile planting system. Each individual planter measures 14 inches wide by 14 inches tall by 5 inches deep. Plant them alone or in huge, dramatic groups. Multiples are hung side by side, so a group of four (shown above) looks like one planter.

This size versatility is something I really needed for outdoor living areas. Some houses have just a single column to cover, others the far end of a porch, and others vast expanses of hard stucco. Resorts and commercial buildings are also candidates for larger installations.

The Living Wall Planters follow the same methods as my side-planting line, which has been used for years - they are tried and true!

This publication gives you the basics. And you have the creativity to do the rest!

Share your creations with me at colorgdn@aol.com. I would love to see them! ”

Pamela

Planting a Living Wall Planter

The Secret to the Instant Full Look: Flexible Side Holes



Empty planter: The holes in the front and sides of the planters allow mature plants to be pushed through the sides for an instant look.



The hole has slits on the side, so the plant won't fall out after planting.



Soak the roots of a plant in a bucket of water. Squeeze it four to six times, and slip it through the hole. Be sure the roots are on the inside and plant is on the outside.

Plant in Layers, From Bottom to Top



Step 1: Stand the planter up on a table. Wet the root balls of the plants, and squeeze them. Slide the root balls through the bottom row of holes. Add potting mix to slightly beneath the next layer of holes and firm it down.



Step 2: Repeat the same process until you have finished planting the holes. **Plant one layer at a time, like lasagna!**



Step 3: Tuck in the edge plants along the top. The finished product looks like it has been planted for months!

Hanging Groups Increases Visual Impact

These photos show how the visual impact of living walls increases as you hang groups as compared with singles. Hang the planters with the sides touching so they look like a single unit.

Of these three images, the porch planting has the most impact because it is the largest. Four planters are hung right next to each other so they appear as one, huge planter.



Above, top: Single planter

Above, bottom: Two planters hung side by side.

Right: Four planters hung together.



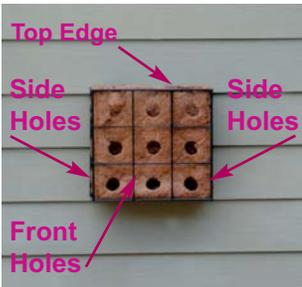
Plant Placement for Singles & Multiples

Hang Alone or In Groups of As Many As You Like!



Living wall planters have holes in the front and sides. Always plant the holes along the outer sides and the front. Tuck plants in along the top edge as well. The hangers are included with each planter.

Planting Singles

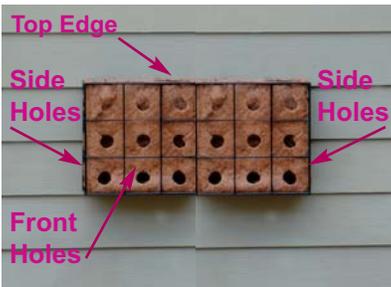


When hanging a living wall planter alone, plant all the holes in the front and sides. Tuck plants along the top edge as well.

Left: Before planting; the arrows show where to plant.

Right: After planting

Planting Two To Hang Side By Side

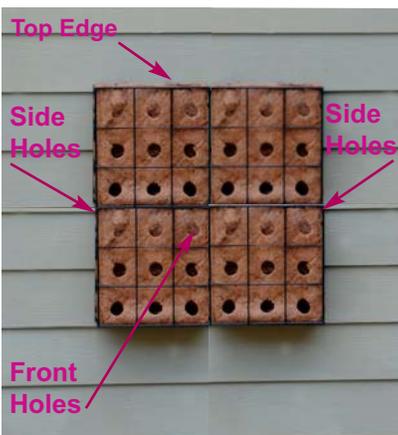


When hanging a two planters together, plant all the holes in the front and outer sides. Tuck plants along the top edge as well. Don't plant along the edges that will be joined or the plants will get smushed!

Left: Before planting; the arrows show where to plant.

Right: After planting

Planting Four Together



When hanging a four planters together, plant all the holes in the front and outer sides. Tuck plants along the top edge as well. Don't plant along the edges that will be joined or the plants will get smushed!

Left: Before planting; the arrows show where to plant.

Right: After planting

It's Easy to Plug Unplanted Holes



Take a handful of loose coco fiber or crumpled newspaper and simply press it over the unplanted hole. Plant the rest of the layer normally.

Watering

How To Water



Living walls are ideal for drip irrigation and we are currently testing different systems.

Hand watering is easy, but takes some time because you need to water slowly, from the top, to give the water time to absorb all the way to the bottom of the planter.

Water with a gentle spray, as shown left. Keep the water moving along the top of the planter to allow it time to absorb. Keep watering until you see a steady stream flowing from the bottom.

If your planters are hung one about another, water as described above plus water the front of the bottom planter until you can see that the potting mix is saturated.

How Often To Water



Water when you see signs of wilt or the soil feels dry to the touch. Use your finger to test the soil. Push it into the soil about an inch or so. Low-water plants like cacti and succulents, need less water and can go longer with dry soil.

Knowing when to water is very important because many container plants die from overwatering. If the plant looks wilted and the soil has been wet for several days, the plant has drowned and will probably die. It has a fungus. You might try a fungicide if the plant is very important to you.

It's really important not to overwater living walls.

Which Plants Require the Least Water



Succulents (far left) require the least water of any plants we tested for living walls. They also have small root systems, which make them perfect for living wall planters.

Shade plants (near left) use about half to one-third as much water as sun plants.

Sun annuals will need the most water and are easiest to maintain with drip irrigation.

Plants

I planted 344 plants in 11 living wall planters for our preliminary trials. I concentrated on plants that are commonly available in garden centers, but will never try them all! How many varieties of petunias are there? I'll never have enough time to try them all! Also, I was planting in summer which limited me to warm weather selections.

But this initial work is a good start. I learned quite a few general principles which should help you a lot.

Foliage Plants

By 'foliage plants,' I am referring to those plants usually found in the indoor plant section of a garden center. Most have interesting leaves instead of glamorous flowers because they grow in shade, and flowers require more light than leaves in most situations. On the whole, the plants that have proved 'tried and true' for generations did quite well. These include pothos, spider plant, ferns, ivy, syngonium, and dracaena.

The newer plants, many with lots of pretty color, did not do well on the whole. I was disappointed in the performance of ajuga, Hemgraphis 'Purple Waffle,' and a beautiful, purple and silver rex begonia, losing most of both varieties. About 50 per cent of the fittonia survived.

One caution: Be sure to accurately assess the light conditions. Only a few foliage plants live in really dark situations.

Overall, I'm encouraged by the results of many of my favorite foliage plants, and am proud to show you the successes on these pages.

Succulents



I tried lots of different sizes and shapes of succulents and learned some valuable information. Succulents that grow in really small clusters did not do well. The *Echeveria* type that look like flowers really thrived. *Sedum* 'Angelina' did well too, and proved a great textural contrast to the *Echeverias*. Since I like to cover up the coco fiber, the sedum was doubly useful.

Be sure to use potting mix especially for succulents, and don't overwater them. **Wait until the potting mix is REALLY dry before watering.**

Succulents are the ideal choice for living walls because they need little water or root space.

Annuals

I have planted tens of thousands of annuals in side-planted baskets. Since these baskets share the same construction as the living wall planters, I assumed the same plants would thrive. That proved to be the case. Almost all the annuals really thrived, including dragon wing begonias, coleus, purple queen or purple heart, wax begonias, sweet potato vines, lantana, and gomphrena. Only blue scaevola disappointed me, with about a 50 per cent death rate. The plants were quite root bound when I planted them, however.

Plant Sizes

The majority of the plants I planted had three-inch root balls, either from individual pots or multipacks. I also used some in four-inch pots. The size difference didn't seem to matter.

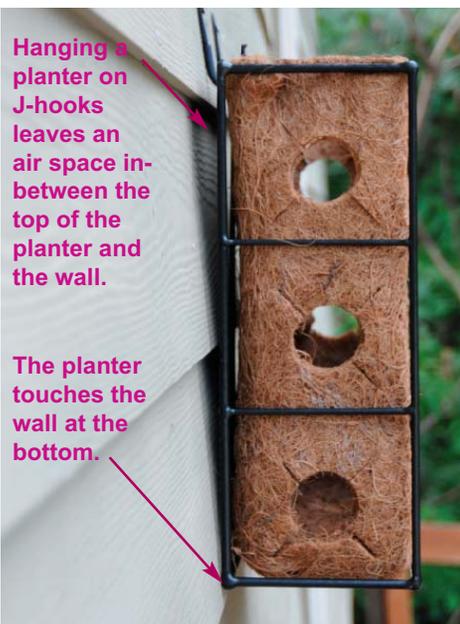
Hanging

Hangers Included With Each Living Wall



J-hooks are ideal hangers because they are easy to hang and keep the Living Walls hung securely. Two are included with each planter.

Keeping the Planter Away from the Wall



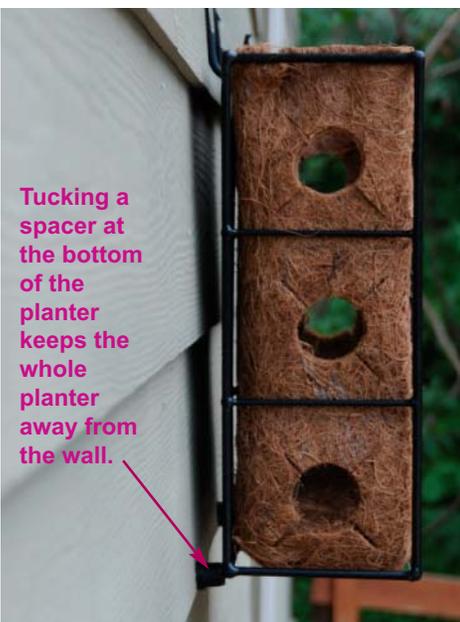
Hanging a planter on J-hooks leaves an air space in-between the top of the planter and the wall.

The planter touches the wall at the bottom.

J-hooks keep the top of the planter away from the wall, but not the bottom. Since my walls are concrete and withstand moisture well, I have simply hung them on the J-hooks and not worried about the small area of contact.

However, if you are concerned about moisture from the planter, tuck a small spacer in between the planter and the wall - at each bottom corner. Be sure to use a material that won't stain the wall, or absorb water. I used a small, plastic sprinkler cap and it worked just fine. I didn't attach it with anything, just tucked it in.

Plastic bottle caps work really well as spacers.



Tucking a spacer at the bottom of the planter keeps the whole planter away from the wall.