



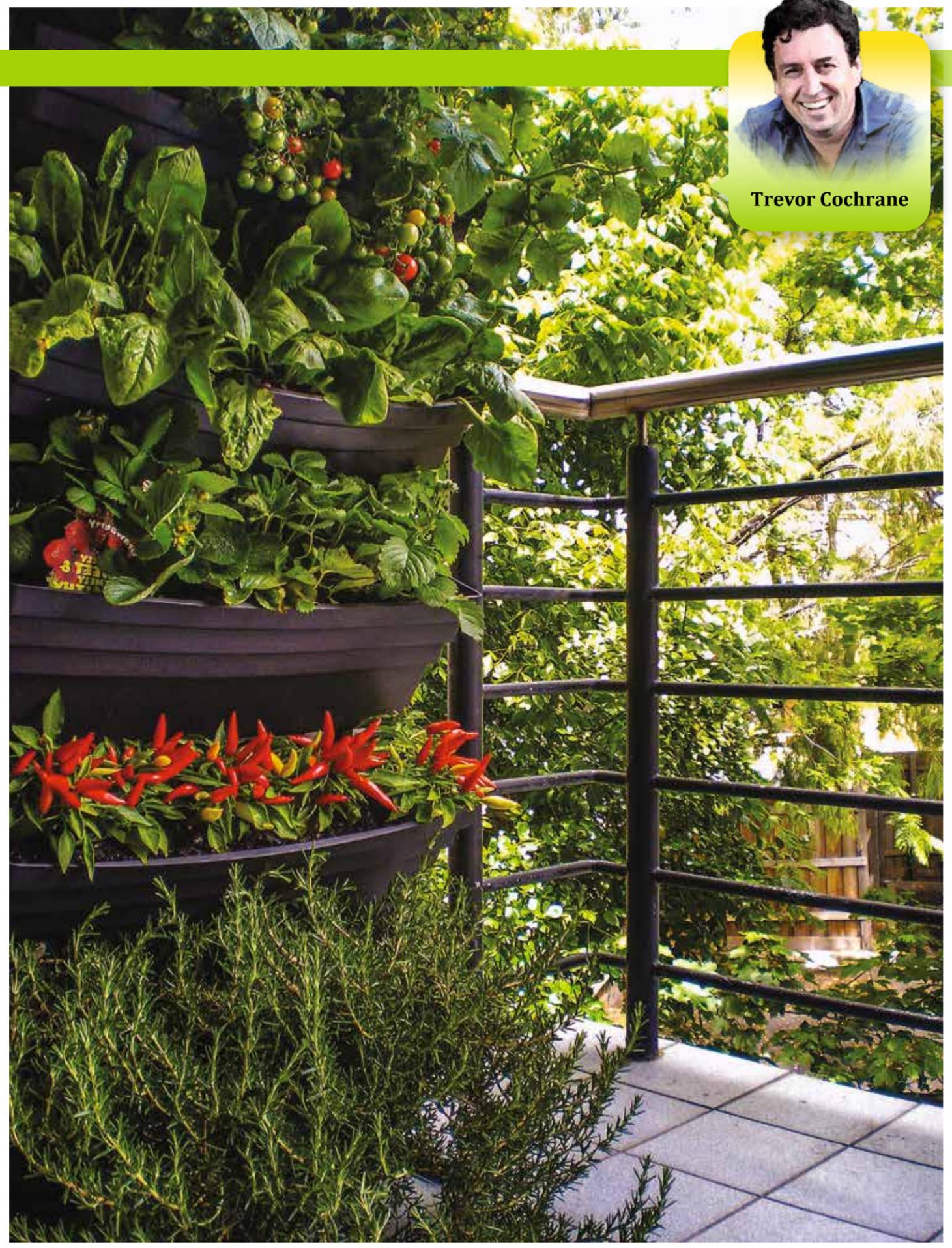
Trevor Cochrane

# REACHING NEW HEIGHTS



We are always on the hunt for innovative new products that make gardening easier and more accessible to every home gardener. *Trevor Cochrane* has found Wallgarden; the easiest, most cost-effective and space-saving garden idea now on the market.

IMAGES Courtesy of Wallgarden



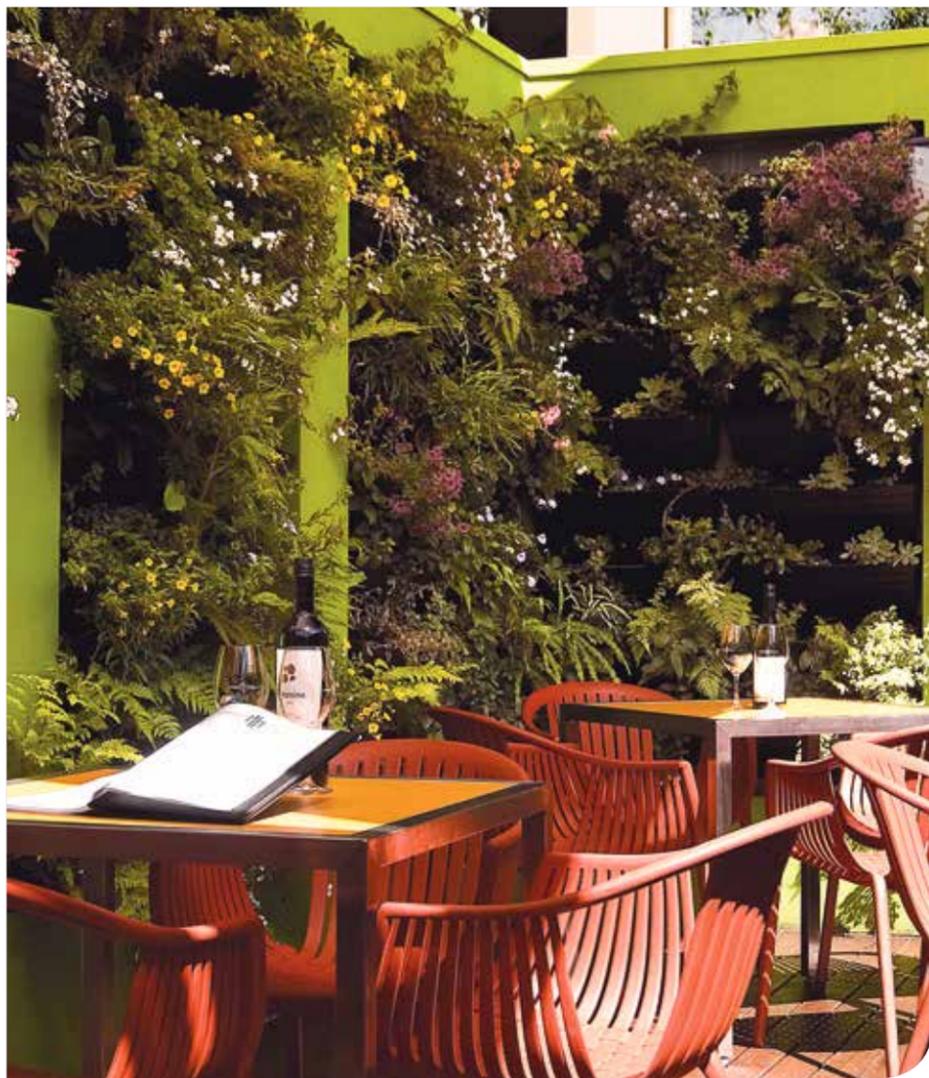


**T**he trouble with many current vertical garden systems available is they are incredibly expensive, but I've recently discovered a system that is allowing home owners to create extremely effective living walls that are also amazingly cost-effective. The Wallgarden system is the brainchild of Australian inventor Stephen Collis, who already has a string of successful innovations to his name. This system has now appeared in a number of high profile areas, such as the Big Brother house and in the Little Veggie Patch Company's book *Seed to Table*. The typical commercial living wall system will cost anywhere from \$1500 to \$2800 per square metre of wall space covered, where the Wallgarden is going to cost well under \$80.

It is got to be the easiest way to grow your own favourite flowers or, even better, herbs or vegies. The system utilises a modified planter box that is effectively a specially designed window box that can be easily mounted on a support frame against a wall or fence. Run a line of them up the fence, densely plant them with the right plants and suddenly your wall is overflowing with foliage or flower.

The system can be established using hydroponics or soil and, more recently, the hydroponics has evolved with some people turning it into an aquaponics system. This uses pond water to water the plants and, after flowing through several trays, the plants have stripped the water of nutrients, allowing it to return to the pond cleansed.

The critical thing is the medium and subsequently the nutritional side of things to maintain it. These plants are contained in a small soil area, so starting with the highest quality potting mix is very important if you want to get the best results. A controlled-release plant food is very important and settling the planting in with Seasol will guarantee great results early on. At times, nutri-



ents supply may lag behind the plants demand and this is often demonstrated by discolouration of foliage, lightening of the green pigment in leaves or darker green veins standing out in the foliage. To combat these mineral deficiencies, add a dose of controlled-release fertiliser like Osmocote Plus Organics and a short-term boost with a quality organically-based plant food like Seasol PowerFeed. The combination is going to drive strong growth that is deep green and very healthy.

The system uses common sense and is incredibly waterwise. Effectively, you water the top planter and the water drips through to the planter below and so on. This then either flows out onto the ground below or is captured and recycled again. Establishing lines of planters covering a wall allows for total wall coverage.

The best irrigation is a simple dripline system that can be connected to the tap or run from an automatic irrigation system. This is a wall garden system that couldn't be easier to set up but, like all wall gardens, the plant selection is absolutely critical. The aspect the wall is set on also impacts results, as direct sunlight can be good as long as watering regimes are set correctly. For example, a south-facing wall is going to have a very minimal light exposure, meaning plants that perform in shade should be used.

Plants at the top of a wall will get more light than those at the bottom, so growing mint varieties lower and high light-demanding varieties such as chilli and basil at the top will get better results. Wherever possible, species such as lemon balm, thyme, sage and oregano are better suited to these systems, as they tend to spill over the side of the planter or cascade down.

Maintenance is the biggest unspoken factor when growing a wall garden. Just as is done with a normal



*"Run a line of them up the fence, densely plant them with the right plants and suddenly your wall is overflowing with foliage or flower."*

garden, your wall garden needs to be cared for. This requires trimming, cleaning dead foliage, fertilising and occasionally replacing plants.

If you are like so many of us these days with smaller gardens, space is limited and the opportunity for a vegetable garden, herb garden or feature wall is limited. Using the Wallgarden system means you can turn the fence, shed or house walls into a stunning feature and I can tell you that the only limitation on what you can achieve with this system is your imagination.

My advice is that this system is the best possible way to grow herbs at home. It also has the convenience of being able to be located near kitchens, potentially changing the way food tastes permanently in your home-pro-

duced meals. Herbs have never been easier to grow and maintain and, if there is one bit of advice I have for you to keep your wall herb garden looking great, it's harvest weekly, almost from the day it is set up. This harvesting ensures the garden always looks great, as the plants will be compact and bushy.

There's a lot of new products released each year to the gardening market but, in my opinion, this is probably one of the most usable, best value releases of the last decade. It can change the look of your outdoor area dramatically for the better.

Wallgarden is available through a selected number of retailers and more information is available from their website [www.wallgarden.com.au](http://www.wallgarden.com.au)