



GREEN DRIVE

Using 100 species of plants, French botanist-cum-artist Patrick Blanc has created an eight-metre vegetal column at the French Embassy. (French) Green Revolution!

Torea Frey

NEW DELHI: With a wild patch of shocking green hair to match his green thumb, French botanist-cum-artist Patrick Blanc pointed at a blade-shaped frond at the top of his latest creation, an eight-metre vegetal column at the French Embassy.

"These creations can be on walls, on curtains, on anything. In India, there are very interesting architects for surfaces," Blanc explained.

He visited Delhi last week to inaugurate his creation. Dominique Girard, the Ambassador of France to India, lauded Blanc's work for bringing rhythm to the Embassy.

"His work of art helps us to be giving back as much soul as we get," Girard commented. "The architects had in mind a

building full of life. Now, with the sound of water always running and his creation flourishing, it is."

Using precisely 100 species of plants, all from nurseries around Delhi, Blanc has imbued life into the otherwise sterile, marble-clad French Embassy. The dense, green "walls" are actually flora grown in the hydroponic method (with sparse amounts of trickling water) in small pockets cut into felt. Though many species are from South America, Blanc said he is particularly proud of incorporating native plants, such as 'the Song of India', into his work.

Although the scale of the columns at the Embassy is magnificent, Blanc said such installations easily can be created for private residences. Many books abound on the gardening

methodology, or help can be found at any local nursery.

"It is not so complicated," he explained. "It took two weeks to create the structure and then one more to install plants with six men. And they last. I've had a wall at home for 20 years. I hope they stay longer than my life!"

But more than simply being a master work of horticulture, Blanc emphasised his work was a blend of science and art.

"You have to know what will become the plant," Blanc said. "It's very important to know what it will look like after it grows for artistic purposes. In a pool of species, I decide artistically which will look best in a space, then I decide the design of the installation, though it's mostly a botanic work."

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RAM RAJMAN



GREEN REVOLUTION: An eight-metre vegetal column at the French Embassy created by French botanist-cum-artist Patrick Blanc.