

# The fascinating green walls of Patrick Blanc



Green walls have become commonplace. Every interior planter or horticulturalist can offer them in all shapes and sizes. You wouldn't think it's a recent phenomenon. But until 20 years ago no one ever thought about vertical planting.

It takes some investigate research to develop an innovative concept like a green wall. Its technical implementation can only be brought about by someone who is obsessed with the subject matter, has a lot of plant knowledge and yet is able to look at the matter with a fresh mind. Patrick Blanc can boast all three characteristics and he was the first to develop green walls that are sustainable as well as huge. He even wrote [a book](#) about it: The Vertical Garden.

## The urban jungle

Patrick Blanc's jungle dream started when he was seven and became fascinated with an aquarium and everything that grew in it, but mostly with the plants. Not only did they grow inside the aquarium, they also flourished outside of it. And when he was a teenager, the aquarium plants grew all over his room. Already at a young age he knew that his life would evolve around the confrontation between these free-living organisms and his own existence as a human being, bound to live in the city. He never liked the countryside, nor did he prefer gardens, except the botanical ones. 'I mostly loved cities really, large cities, and the most undisturbed natural habitats'.



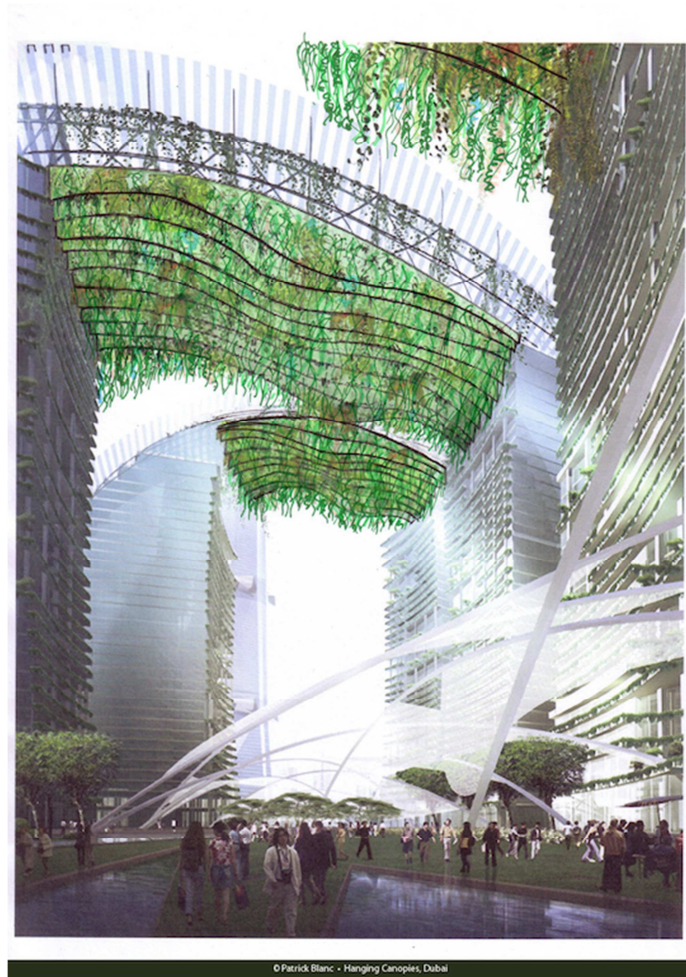
## **Re-creating natural patterns**

Many people know Patrick Blanc's work. The magic of this book really is where he shows how he looks at natural landscapes. And by doing so together with him, you will discover new ways to look at our cityscape that is turning greener and greener.

Nature leaves nothing uncovered or unused. Plants and animals use every square inch to live in. They do so vertically as often as horizontally, making beautiful patterns in the process, and often using the most intelligent forms of co-existence. And it's that knowledge that Blanc has used in developing his unique vertical green wall system that contains no earth, just a type of synthetic felt. He knows, up to the smallest detail, which plants are able to live on a few drops of water or just a little bit of light. He also knows if plants thrive in pattern-filled colonies or by spreading out randomly. These patterns he re-creates on the walls as much as possible. Because that is what he's looking for: re-creating true habitats and ecosystems, but limited by the size and shape of a city.

The pictures and descriptions of landscapes in the book show his outlook and also that his work has not reached full development yet. Not only does he think walls, he also thinks along the same lines as nature. If it were up to him, every millimetre of our concrete, square and controlled environment would be much greener.

He translates tropical jungles into indoor walls, but also finds inspiration in the forest of more moderate climate zones to create walls that need to be able to resist frost and wind. And his most recent work you can see the re-creation of natural landscapes of hanging plants.



## **For whom is this book interesting?**

You can read, and look at, this book at many levels: for those with aesthetic, architectural or stylistic interests the landscapes and his translations thereof are intriguing. For those looking for more information about the plant varieties, the book is filled with detailed descriptions that can readily be used in daily practice.

The technique he has developed to construct these huge outdoor walls is also discussed extensively as well as the challenges his projects have met along the way both in terms of organisation and maintenance.

After reading this book, a green wall is no longer just ‘a thing’; it is a vision and an exploration in finding the same rich ecosystems for our limited city or indoor lives as there are in unspoiled nature.

The book *The Vertical Garden* appeared in France in 2008, and was subsequently translated into English and German. It has been completely revised in 2012. In structure it is a very simple book about how it all came about, where he got his inspiration from, and with a number of examples. But this description does not do the book any justice. *The Vertical Garden* is sheer magic for all of us (working in the green industry).