



From top
In the kitchen, Carrara marble worktops complement the units in dovetailed solid walnut, with burr walnut edges in ebony on the cabinet doors • A 200-year old French oak staircase in the entrance area has a bespoke brushed aluminium handrail, blending in with solid walnut skirting boards and doorframes

For one of the bedrooms, the client mentioned they'd seen a fabulous velvet and silk bedspread on the TV series *The Tudors*, so Rendall sat down to watch the DVD, and crafted one in its image. "The client said if the house caught fire, this would be the first item they would save," she says with a laugh.

As the building offered little by way of inspiration, architecturally-speaking, all of Rendall's energies went into creating interesting themes with the décor. In one of the other bedrooms, which she named 'The Indian Room', aubergine walls create warmth and provide a moody backdrop for the headboard, a door salvaged from an Afghan merchant's house.

Just as much care was placed in crafting the exteriors of the home. Intricately-carved wooden posts, made from timber "cut from the highest point of the mountain where they are closest to the gods", date back two centuries. "The Australian carpenter had to sit down and look at them for about an hour before he would touch them," Rendall recalls.

"We certainly injected cultural differences involved with international design," the designer says. "We care about all the details." ●



The Green Issue

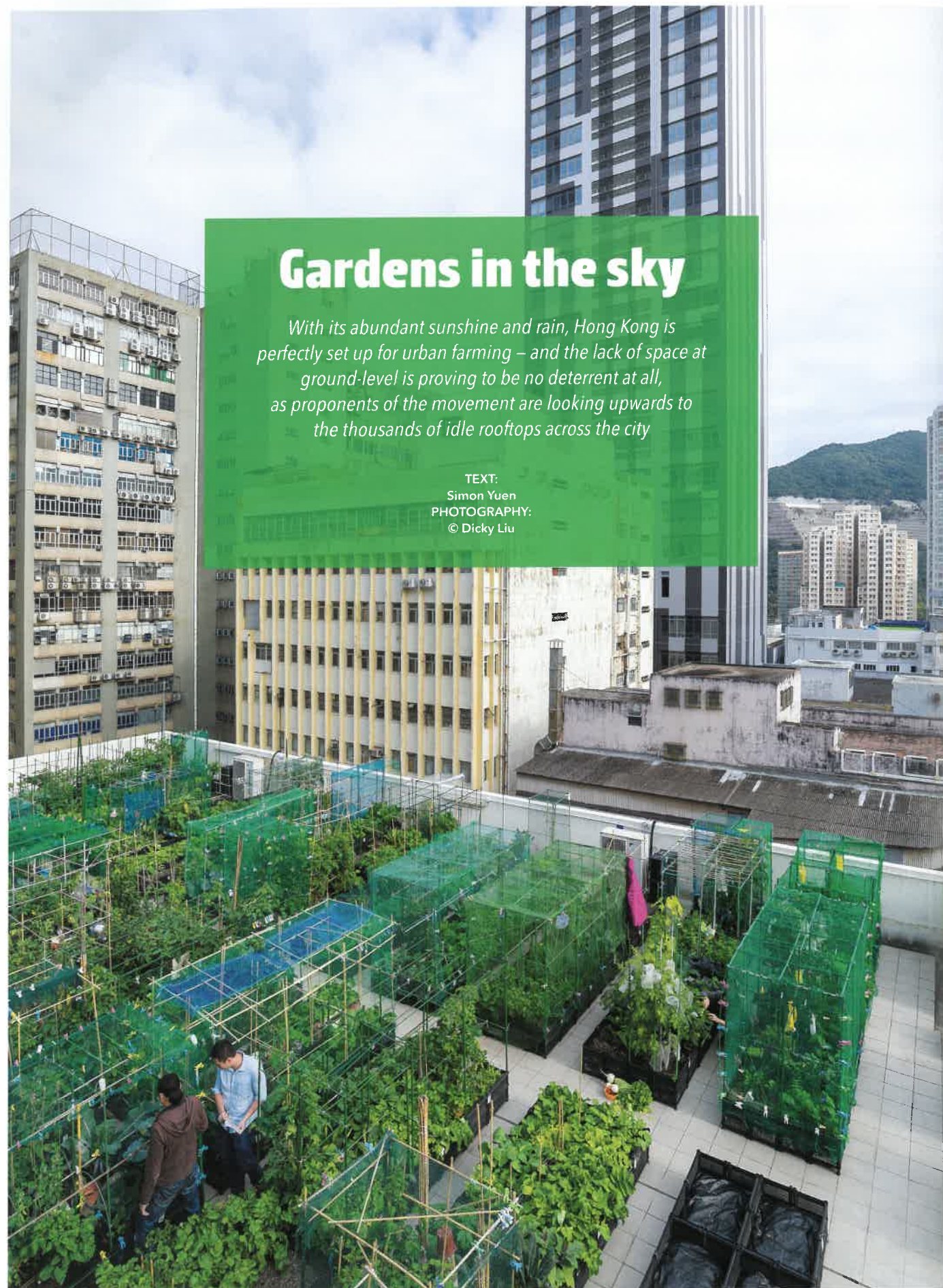
- Designer Q&A: A green effect
- Takashi Niwa, Vo Trong Nghia Architects Vietnam
- The greening of Tai Koo
- Furniture and lighting designer David Trubridge
- Rooftop farming in Hong Kong
- Eco-products
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Gardens in the sky

With its abundant sunshine and rain, Hong Kong is perfectly set up for urban farming – and the lack of space at ground-level is proving to be no deterrent at all, as proponents of the movement are looking upwards to the thousands of idle rooftops across the city

TEXT:
Simon Yuen
PHOTOGRAPHY:
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Tall buildings near rooftop farms can block direct sunlight, but can also prove to be helpful, providing protection for the crops against strong winds



From left

Pol Fàbrega, one of the founders of Rooftop Republic, says they have designed over 20 farms spanning more than 2,200 sq-ft across the city, which play a key role in promoting environmental protection and organic farming • Osbert Lam, owner of City Farm, which offers farming classes and daily management services for tenants



Ever since the bulk of its manufacturing and farming industries moved northwards across the border to mainland China, Hong Kong has relied on imported produce and goods. But with increasing numbers of food scares, from toxic fertilisers to 'fake' rice, the territory's citizens are ramping up their awareness of key issues such as environmental protection and food safety. One of the direct results of these concerns has been the growth of urban farming, as more people do whatever they can to ensure the quality of the produce they and their families consume.

One such organisation is City Farm. Founded in 2011, it operates three rooftop farms in the districts of Chai Wan, Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan, offering farming classes and space for the public to create and tend to their own compact farms. With industrial enterprises having vacated the area decades ago, City Farm has stepped in to make use of the abundant empty buildings which once housed factories.

"We always look for rooftop spaces in industrial areas," explains Osbert Lam, founder of City Farm. "Apart from low rental, industrial buildings are also designed to carry heavy loading, making them ideal for us to design farms in."

The Chai Wan branch of City Farm can accommodate about 300 mini

farms; each measuring approximately two metres wide by three metres long. These raised planting beds are grouped and evenly spaced to meet the loading requirement of the building structure.

According to Lam, it is easier to manage farms on rooftops than fields in the countryside. An ideal location for rooftop farms requires surrounding taller buildings to provide cover on windy days, but they must also allow sufficient sunlight to reach the farms so as not to hamper the growth of crops. To provide additional protection, City Farm also set up windbreaks on the east or northeast sides of the rooftop.

Hong Kong's climate makes year-long planting easy, even in winter, when produce such as kale, tomatoes, carrots, lemongrass and eggplants are some of the common crops grown at City Farm.

At the moment, rooftop farming remains a leisure activity. Hong Kong's government has strict regulations over the use of industrial buildings in place, but Lam hopes that a loosening of the restrictions will take place in order to help promote agriculture.

"Hong Kong has a good climate for farming – we can harvest different crops across four seasons," he says. "But for now, rooftop farms are only a place where a few citizens can experience and enjoy farming. However, I hope that in future, rooftop farms will be able to supply food to the market so that urban farmers can earn a living."

Over at Rooftop Republic, the focus is on urban farms such as the one on the rooftop of the Fringe Club in Central. The concept of farming in the heart of a city is not unknown, but in this instance, extra caution was required when designing this little urban farm as the Fringe is classed as a Grade 1 historic building, dating back about 125 years.

"Before designing the farm, we conducted meticulous research on the structure to make sure we position the farms in the right spots," explains Pol Fàbrega, one of the founders of Rooftop Republic, which launched in 2015.

Rooftop Republic's dream is to revolutionise the food system by empowering people to grow and reconnect with their own food. It has created about 20 rooftop farms spanning over 2,200 sq-ft across the city, helping to design and install farms through initial site and loading assessment, along with customised farm design. The group also provides organic seedlings, soil, fertilisers and gardening equipment.

Beyond setting up the sky farms, Rooftop Republic also helps manage them and holds workshops and events for corporate clients and students to promote urban farming. Another

surprise benefit of farming in the midst of skyscrapers is that pest control is simple, due to there being fewer insects and birds. "We use CDs as a means to repel birds," says Fàbrega. "It is simple yet very effective."

Rooftop Republic is now planting spinach, Italian basil, radishes, Roman lettuce and tomatoes, and also supplies these crops to F&B outlets. "We want to reconnect the food production system with the public and demonstrate a sustainable lifestyle. There is a trend of going green in the city; hopefully we can see more farmers in future!" Fàbrega says. ●

Set up on top of the Fringe Club in Central, Rooftop Republic demonstrates that urban organic farming is not just possible but can also be profitable for corporate clients, providing supplies for F&B outlets



In creating a rooftop farm at The Fringe Club, extra caution was required as the original structure is classed as a Grade 1 historic building, dating back about 125 years

