

Easy-care plants for balconies

By Dr CHRISTOPHER TEH

Do you have a question about plants or how to maintain your garden? Send your questions to the Plant Doctor! Email your questions to lifestyle@thestar.com.my with "Plant Doctor" in the subject field. Questions may be edited for brevity and clarity.

Dear Plant Doctor,

Q I am a new plant parent and live in an apartment with a moderate-sized balcony with strong afternoon sun. Can you share some low-maintenance plants that are good for beginners? – LK

One good choice is the ZZ plant (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*). This plant is incredibly forgiving and requires very little water, making it perfect for beginners. It thrives in low to bright indirect light but can also tolerate direct sunlight, which is ideal for your balcony. Additionally, ZZ plants are hardy to pests.

Another option is the snake plant (*Sansevieria* spp.). This hardy plant requires little water and can adapt to various light conditions, including bright indirect light and direct sunlight. It is drought-resistant, which is ideal for someone just starting their plant journey.

Further consider the ponytail palm (*Beaucarnea recurvata*), which has a unique appearance. This plant prefers to be watered sparingly, allowing the soil to dry between waterings. It thrives in bright, indirect sunlight but can also tolerate some direct sunlight. Its distinctive look adds



The snake plant (right and left) is a hardy plant that requires little water and can adapt to various light conditions. – 123rf

character to your balcony, and it requires minimal care.

Canna lilies (*Canna* spp.) is another attractive choice. They require regular watering, but are resilient to drought once they are established. Canna lilies thrive in full sun, making them well-suited for sunny balconies.

Their bright flowers and lush foliage not only enhance their space but also attract pollinators.

Consider adding a philodendron for lush greenery. This plant is easy to care for and only requires watering when the topsoil is dry. While it prefers bright,

indirect light, it can also adapt to lower light conditions.

The Monstera (*Monstera deliciosa*), also known as the Swiss cheese plant, requires similar care to the philodendron, needing water when the top inch of soil is dry. Monstera plants thrive under bright, indirect light but can tolerate some direct sunlight.

Their unique leaf structure makes them a striking addition to any space, and they propagate easily. Add vibrant colours to your balcony by choosing bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea* spp.).

Once established, it requires

minimal watering and thrives in full sun. Bougainvillea plants are drought-tolerant and produce stunning flowers, creating a lively atmosphere on your balcony.

Finally, there is always the rubber plant (*Ficus elastica*). This attractive plant is easy to care for, requiring water only when the topsoil is dry. It prefers bright, indirect light but can tolerate some direct sunlight.

The rubber plant will enhance your balcony space with its glossy foliage. To ensure that the plants thrive, remember to check the soil moisture regularly and water only when the topsoil is dry. Using a balanced fertiliser will promote healthy growth.

Position your plants to receive adequate sunlight, especially those that thrive in full sun, and regularly inspect for pests, removing them by hand, or using natural remedies such as neem oil if necessary.

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