

The Overgrowth

Kori Waldrup & Kate Carroll, Ph.D., Department of Textile and Apparel Technology and Management, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC

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This piece was created as an outcome of research on vertical gardening in fashion design for an undergraduate research project. The idea for the topic arose after observation of the growing trend of vertical gardening in home décor and urban landscaping. The purpose of this piece was to apply the research on vertical gardening and to observe the effect of different species of plants



when planted on the body. Vertical gardening is increasing in popularity as the need for “green” rises and the space for that “green” decreases. The children’s library in San Vicente de Raspeig, Spain was one inspiration for this piece. Growing six stories tall, this garden uses cubic containers and metal grids. Installed by architect Jose Maria Chofre, this system of vertical gardening allows many different types of plants to grow on the wall. Succulents were the chosen plants for this project because of their known success in vertical gardening in homes and urban landscape. Succulents are very easy to care for; they do not require much water.

The design process for this piece began by determining the overall silhouette of the garment and which parts would be planted; the color scheme of the plants and fabrics, and the method of vertical gardening that would be used. Before the skirt was constructed, the designer experimented with the succulents and their behavior when planted on fabric. Succulent trimmings were purchased and planted in a small plot. The plot was

constructed out of the fabric that was used in the final skirt, bird mesh, and chicken wire. The chicken wire, used to provide stability, was wrapped with fabric and the sphagnum moss was stuffed in between the fabric and the bird mesh, which was then sewn all together. The succulent trimmings proved to grow well when left in the sun and the fabric held up very well throughout the process as well.

After testing the method, the skirt was constructed. First the plants were purchased and laid out around the garment in a way that would balance the weight of the plants and be aesthetically pleasing. The skirt was constructed starting with a hoop skirt as the base of the garment. Bird

mesh was then hand sewn on the bottom edge to the hoop skirt where the plants would be, filled with sphagnum moss, and sewn closed on the top edge of the bird mesh. Next a small area was cut from the bird mesh to insert the succulents and tropical plants around the hoopskirt. The



silver tiers, made out of 40% polyester and 60% cotton, were hemmed with a lockstitch machine and then hand stitched to the skirt. Lastly, a hook and eye was added to close the back over the drawstring of the hoop skirt.

To complement the texture of the plants, a tasseled white and black polyester fabric and 12% cotton 88% polyester faux leather/vinyl was used for the halter. The halter was constructed with a lockstitch machine. It includes straps that tie around the neck and a corset back that laces up and ties. A lime 100% wool fabric was used for the hoodie with a 100% polyester faux suede fuchsia lining, which was also constructed with a lockstitch machine and seams finished with an overlock machine. The lime and fuchsia emphasize the pops of color from the leaves of the plants. This piece was completed in March 2013. The plants require occasional misting.

The dimensions of the piece when the corset back is tied are: Bust 38", Waist 29". The circumference of the skirt is 119".

Reference:

Meinhold, B. (2010, August 4). *Six-Story Vertical Garden Sprouts in San Vicente Town Square*. [online]. Retrieved February 3, 2013 from: <http://inhabitat.com/beautiful-vertical-garden-in-san-vicente-town-square/>