

How Can We Reduce Air Pollution?

Malta's polluted air has been a growing issue, and as a result, a significant number of people, including children, suffer from respiratory problems. In fact, Krysta Cutajar, a medical student said,

"In Malta, clean air is becoming a luxury—especially for our children. As a future doctor, I see how toxic air doesn't just pollute the skies—it clogs tiny lungs and steals childhoods."



Krysta Cutajar, medical student studying for the course of Doctor of Medicine and Surgery. Source: [Malta's Children Pay the Price for Air Pollution](#) | [Children's Environmental Health Collaborative](#)

Construction is a major contributor to air pollution as the materials used in the industry are associated with dust, machinery emissions, and the release of harmful gases such as carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide. To reduce the pollution released during construction, developers could introduce a different approach to building structures.

Green buildings, also known as sustainable buildings, are structures that are designed and constructed in a manner that reduces their environmental impact. Apart from using renewable energy sources, they also aim to improve air quality inside and around the building, brilliant for people who suffer from respiratory conditions.

A common feature of green buildings is outer walls that are adorned with attractive plants that thrive in the climate and act as a natural filter against air pollution. This is generally done by creating metal frames that support plastic panels onto which pre-grown plants are inserted. These plants are



The plants chosen for green buildings are not only aesthetically beautiful but are also hardy and able to survive in harsh conditions. Source: [These are the most magnificent green buildings around the world](#)

able to survive as they are sustained by nutrient-packed rolls of felt and automatic sprinklers.

Of course, the plants must be carefully selected, according to factors such as climate, maintenance, and health considerations. They should ideally be endemic or native to the country, as they require less maintenance and water. In Malta, suitable plants for green buildings include *Cotoneaster franchetii* shrubs, rosemary, and Mediterranean thyme. Whilst not all plants typically used on these walls absorb pollutants, some of them attract wildlife such as butterflies, bees, and birds, which are crucial for maintaining a healthy ecosystem.

Another feature of green buildings is their rooftop gardens. They can also be a great alternative to green walls. They are easier to maintain and give occupants a green, recreational space in urban areas, where green open spaces are often limited.

A benefit is that there is a wider range of plants to choose from. Trees such as Aleppo pines and White poplars are great options as they both absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen and filter air pollutants. Residents may also be offered the



Example of how Rooftop Gardens can be designed. Source: [A lush green rooftop garden amidst towering skyscrapers | Premium AI-generated image](#)

opportunity to have or take care of a small garden area. This encourages people to spend more time surrounded by greenery. Countless studies have shown that gardening boosts both physical and psychological health, as it promotes physical activity and improves mental wellbeing.

Green buildings could be the key to reducing air pollution, an issue that affects all living things. Though they are costly, they are an investment that rewards us in many ways. If developers and policymakers are considering doing this, they should remember that these projects are not only beneficial for us, but also for coming generations.



Example of Green Buildings. Source: [What Is Green Architecture? How It Informs Modern Sustainability](#)

Around the world, many countries are investing in sustainable architecture to combat climate change and improve urban air quality. Malta can follow this global movement by encouraging greener construction policies and incentives. Clean air should not become a luxury. By investing in green buildings and sustainable planning, Malta can protect both public health and the environment for the future.

References:

[Aleppo Pines: Perfect Trees for Dry, Sunny Landscapes](#)

[White Poplar – Populus alba – il-Luq – Chadwick Lakes](#)

[Dig into the benefits of gardening - Mayo Clinic Health System](#)

[Benefits of Rooftop Gardens: How They Transform Urban Living – Roof Home](#)

[17 Plants That Thrive on Roofs Without Spreading Wildly - Plantisima](#)

[Three Native Roadside Shrubs You Can Plant To Help Detoxify Malta's Fume-Filled Roads](#)

