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Lavinia with the medals she won at the International Masters Championship 2023 in Dubai

Chetan is my biggest cheerleader: Lavinia

Lavinia Hansraj continues to be on a roll. The former model and airhostess recently won a gold medal at the International Masters Championship Dubai 2023 for 100 metres and 200 metres, and a silver medal in long jump. Lavinia, who is actor Chetan Hansraj's wife, has had an inspiring journey in the world of sports. She took to athletics five years ago and has been making India proud by winning international championships in the over 35 women's category.

Lavinia says, "I am an athlete and I am proud to represent women over 35. This is my third international championship and before Dubai, I was a part of Sri Lanka and Malaysia championships as well. I am so happy and grateful that I have got this opportunity to represent our country on a global platform. The feel of winning a medal for India is indescribable."

Hubby Chetan is proud of her. She says, "He has been a huge support and is my biggest cheerleader. He encourages and motivates me a lot. When I am busy, he looks after things at home and that's really sweet of him. Our son is very supportive, too."

She admits it's not easy pursuing a sport, but is happy to have managed to strike a good bal-

'BELIEVE IN YOUR DREAMS'

When she started her athletics journey, were there second thoughts at any point? "Not really because I always knew I had it in me," says Lavinia. "One day I decided to follow my dream and there was no looking back after that. I want to urge all the women out there who want to do more in their lives that they just need to believe in themselves and their dreams. You can start at any age," adds Lavinia.



Chetan and Lavinia Hansraj

— Hasti Doshi

ance. She shares, "I started training in 2018 and it has been tough and challenging for me because it's not easy managing your home, your business (she is into interiors) and a career in sports. Training takes a lot of time; I put in at least two hours every morning. But running has always been my passion right from school days and I am glad that I have managed to fulfill my dream. I may have started late, but it's worth it."



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Creative ways to beautify your balcony

By reimagining your balcony, you can turn it into a haven that satisfies your longing for the outdoors with all the creature comforts of home. From decor suggestions to gardening tips, here are a few ideas to revamp your outdoor space this season

■ Response: Mumbai @timesgroup.com

In recent times, balconies have transformed into cherished spaces for relaxation and productivity, allowing individuals to nurture a connection with nature. By employing design ideas that focus on creating a sense of comfort, you can upgrade your balcony into a retreat for morning meditation or a lounge for alfresco dining. If you haven't viewed your balcony from a creative perspective, it's time to seek inspiration and consider updating it.

EMBRACE NATURE
Turn your balcony into a green oasis that brings the essence of nature into your home. There are abundant

ways to achieve this. Whether it's potted plants, hanging planters, climbing creepers, or even vertical gardens, you can introduce greenery to foster a peaceful environment for relaxation; the arrangement can be tailored to accommodate the available space and budget. Moreover, a lush balcony serves as a natural air purifier, filtering pollutants and enhancing the circulation of fresh, clean air within your living space.

FLOORING THAT FITS
Use the lacklustre concrete floors of your balcony by laying down versatile nested patio tiles; these can be easily installed and removed, thus making them suitable for a rented apartment too. Look for affordable hard-



wood floor tiles from reputed furniture companies. However, avoid cork flooring due to its moisture sensitivity and tendency to retain marks over time. Instead, consider insulated linoleum or a rug made from moisture-resistant fabric to create a cosy and inviting atmosphere.

For a balcony intended as an outdoor dining, reading, or work area, prioritise weather-proof furniture pieces such as those made out of cane. Enhance the flooring with a vibrant scroll-patterned outdoor mat that can also double as a summer blanket. Complement it with a sturdy polypropylene coffee table and a synthetic wicker sofa in warm hues of yellow and orange. Incorporate a couple of folding chairs for additional seating options. Another great

choice is a wooden pallet-style sofa adorned with weather-resistant cushions.

AN OPEN OFFICE

As hybrid work culture becomes more prevalent, balconies are being transformed into dedicated home offices. Set up a rattan desk and chair combination for a stylish and comfortable workspace. Consider adding a bookcase on one side to create a mini library. That said, remember to insulate the walls and ensure proper ventilation to protect the books from moisture. Even the smallest balcony can

accommodate a secretaire, an armchair, or a rack to store items to pursue one's hobbies and creative passions. If there's limited space, apply light-coloured paint to visually expand the area. However, it is advisable to avoid blue paint as it tends to fade faster when exposed to sunlight.

LET THERE BE PLAY

Converting the balcony into a child's play zone ensures ample natural light and fresh air, which are essential for the well-being of your little one. Opt for furniture in soothing colours rather than going after vibrant hues. Ideally, the design theme of the balcony should incorporate pastel colours, which have a calming effect on the nervous system. To accommodate a child's love for playing on the floor, lay down a soft, weather-proof outdoor mat or rug. Create a comfortable seating area close to the ground using mattresses and cushions. There are numerous possibilities for elevating your balcony. By implementing a thoughtful approach to designing and maximising the space, you can turn it into a functional area that promotes productivity and relaxation.

■ Saundarya Jain @timesgroup.com

How aromasmells defines one's experience of inhabiting it. To this end, here's how you can use soothing scents to

enhance your home's ambience. **THE WIDELY LOVED LAVENDER**
The aroma of flowers can have a profound impact on one's mood and well-being. You must

choose scents that are not only pleasant, but also possess therapeutic qualities. Take lavender, for example, which is renowned for its soothing effect. "The gentle notes of lavender promote relaxation and are

very useful in alleviating stress. As a result, you can use it in bathrooms or meditation zones," suggests interior designer Nitin Singhal. While discussing the benefits of lavender-scented candles,

In favour of a fragrant home

Be it the serene scent of lavender or the energising notes of violet, these fragrances will refresh your senses and revive your living space

Kuntal Vyas Aggarwal, founder and design head of an interiors and architecture design studio, mentions, "These items not only provide the desired fragrances but also add to the visual appeal of the space. Remember to use candle holders that complement the overall aesthetic of your home."

UNWIND WITH AROMATHERAPY
Beyond scented candles, there's much you can try. Aggarwal notes, "Essential oils and diffusers allow for a controlled and continuous release of fragrance. Boasting versatile applications, these can be placed discreetly in various rooms for a calming effect." Geetika Menon, a homemaker,

also likes to use diffusers to create an aromatic atmosphere. "These accessories provide a consistent way to disperse fragrances throughout your home. They also look stunning, require minimal maintenance and don't feature any open flames or electricity," she shares.

FRESH AND FLORAL
Leading with a heady and slightly spicy fragrance, the scent of lilacs is invigorating and can lift one's spirits. Singhal details, "As lilac is known to improve mood, it serves as a great addition to living rooms and workspaces. Owing to its floral undertones, you can pair lilac with complementary notes like rose and jasmine for a more pleasing effect." Likewise, violet is known for its sweet

and floral notes, exuding an aroma that is reminiscent of fresh, dewy mornings. It's effective in creating a sense of serenity in bedrooms. Aggarwal believes, "Their perfume is often delicate and subtle, rendering them suitable for creative workspaces or cosy corners where you seek inspiration." If you're striving for a lingering effect, use incense featuring violets to inspire feelings of comfort and contentment. However, it's advisable to use it in moderation as burning incense in large quantities or frequently can adversely affect your health.

explore heliotrope, verbena, and blue hyacinth. While heliotrope boasts a sweet, vanilla-like aroma, verbena's lemony notes bring an invigorating freshness. "Besides this, pick fresh flowers and plants that can be

placed on tabletops for a natural appearance," suggests Aggarwal. This celebratory season, use these fragrances to treat yourself and your guests to a truly special sensory experience.

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