GETTING SIMPLY MORE SUSTAINABLE, MARKS & SPENCER

BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT OVERVIEW

As a responsible retailer, we recognise that we must protect and where possible enhance the environments in which we trade. Over the past few years we have launched a series of new stores which included a range of sustainable features including green living walls (see more details of Cheshire Oaks and Ecclesall Road). Through the review of these features we found that our customers and the local community particularly liked the green walls and felt that this added to their shopping experience and made a positive difference to their local area. Our focus now lies on applying sustainable learnings to our existing stores in order to give scale and momentum to our sustainable programme. As such we have launched four Simply Food Retrofit Plan A Stores which each have a range of eco features including green living walls.

Fact box

Company name:
Marks & Spencer

Project name:
Getting Simply More Sustainable

Location:
Epping, Oswestry, Slough and Heswall

Biodiversity enhancement:
Green wall

Size:
N/A

Cost:
N/A

Tips:

- Please see our biodiversity manual for guidance on green walls.
- Consult a Structural Engineer early on in the project.
- Establish available locations for the rainwater harvesting tank
- Allow time in your project plans for obtaining planning permissions and for the plants to grow. Green walls can't be built in a day!

Year completed:
2013

Categories:

- Large scale permanent
- Community engagement
- Most innovative

METHODOLOGY

- Green walls were installed in these stores primarily to help promote biodiversity. The planting was carefully selected at each store primarily for their ecological biodiversity as well as their suitability to site conditions. The plant colours are aimed at attracting bee and butterfly populations to the walls.

- There are also other perceived benefits of green walls (as outlined in our biodiversity manual). Plants can provide shade, cooling in the building in summer and insulation during the winter. Evapotranspiration occurring at the building surface can help to reduce the urban heat island effect. Plants can absorb CO_2 and help remove other pollutants from the air. The water retention properties of green walls help alleviate localised flooding.

- Green walls are highly visible and can transform a building into something which lives, breathes and changes with the seasons. We feel green walls help to promote sustainability to our customers and the wider community and that they help enhance our brand. To help educate people around these many benefits of green walls we invested in customer signage at the four stores. We conducted customer market research at all four stores after the installation so that we could better measure the benefits of new features. Customers remarked that it was more visually appealing and that it shows that M&S is willing to make efforts to 'give something back' to the environment.

- We recognised that green walls consume water and therefore aimed to minimise the adverse environmental impact of the living walls by installing rainwater harvesting for their irrigation.

- This was the first time we had retrofitted green walls to existing stores. It was a big challenge due to the age and variety of the buildings to find solutions that would be visually appealing and structurally sound. We took the opportunity to trial three different green walls solutions. Two of these had not previously been installed on M&S buildings and one of these was new to the UK market altogether– chosen specifically due to being lightweight. Following on from the project we conducted a full review so that we captured the learnings to apply these to green wall projects in the future.

Some of the retrofitted stores