

Condominium Home Owners Association

A non-profit association serving strata owners since 1976

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Condo Smarts

Headline: Strata crucial for decks, balconies

Topic: Patio gardens

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Condo dwelling can be idyllic.

One Sunshine Coast couple, for example, regularly woke up every morning to a ritual of coffee on their balcony. At Christmas they bought trees in pots and the trees grew to become two metres tall, occupying 200-litre pots. Delighted and disastrous, especially after a heavy rainfall last Christmas.

One morning they awoke to find the balcony, trees and everything gone. Also, the neighbours below were flooded because the collapsed balcony had crushed their patio hot-tub and the water burst through their balcony doors.

Luckily, the strata corporation's insurance covered the damage to the building but damage can result in costs in the thousands to the owners and corporation.

Strata Law: The strata corporation is responsible for the maintenance and repair of common property. The decks and patios may be limited common property and owners have some limited obligation to maintain the areas.

Before owners consider planting a balcony garden, they should read their bylaws and rules. Strata corporations can restrict or limit the type of gardening allowed on decks, balconies and

patios. Every building has a load limitation, which strata owners and corporations must be aware of. Many strata corporations have implemented bylaws that restrict the types or sizes of planters and pots and even the drainage systems on the containers to be used to avoid excessive water containment, over-flow to other balconies, or the risk of damage to the deck.

Tips: A 200-L pot with a two-metre tree is likely to weigh 50-100 kg. Add soil and lots of rain and it can weigh up to 350 kilos. Because most areas are common or limited common property, the strata corporation and owners should also routinely inspect areas that are susceptible to stress loads and deterioration

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