

A solution for terraced gardens GARDENING WITH GABIONS

Do away with unsightly concrete blocks for ever. Now, Maccaferri SA (Pty) Ltd has put 125 years of experience into designing a highly effective, environmentally friendly and attractive "Garden Gabion" for all your retaining wall and slope protection requirements.

What is a gabion?

A gabion is a basket made from galvanised and PVC coated steel wire mesh, which is woven into a hexagonal pattern, with double twisted joints. This ensures that the basket will not unravel should any of the wire links be cut or damaged.

A gabion is strong and flexible, and with time, soil and debris fills the gaps between the rocks, allowing further pathways for vegetation establishment. Neither the rocks, nor the wire mesh create an obstacle to growing vegetation.

Gabion baskets are filled with rocks and used as building blocks to create terraced and reinforced soil structures.

Suitable plant species for a gabion.

Many plants are adapted to grow on steep and even vertical cliff faces. Some are attractive, while others are simply planted for functional reasons, such as their soil binding properties. To quickly encourage stabilisation of the soil, species with a tendency to scramble or an ability to cling to vertical cliff faces, such as *Ficus burtt-davyi*, should be planted at the base of or directly above the gabions, where there is a sufficient amount of existing soil.

We recommend you contact your local nursery or a nearby horticulturist for specific recommendations on the most suitable vegetation for your site as plant selection is dependent on soil and site conditions.

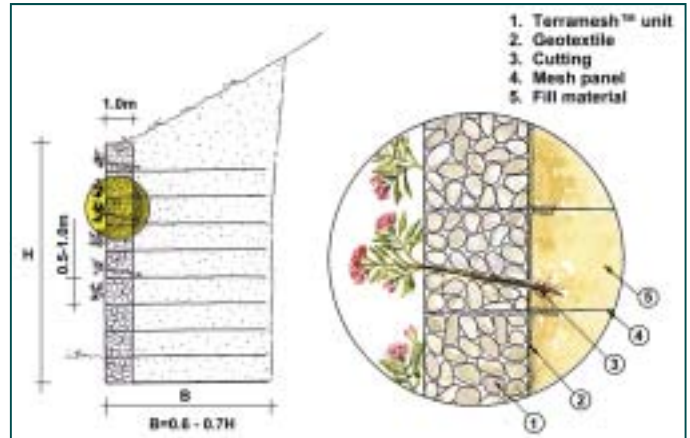


Figure 2

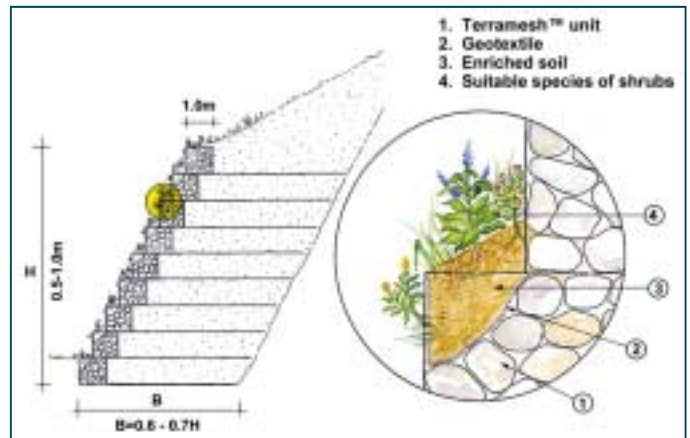


Figure 3



Figure 1



Figure 4

Site preparation and plant establishment.

Analyse your site: for example, if you have a cool, shady, south-facing aspect, you would need plants adapted to a shady situation; or, if you have a warm, north-facing aspect, your plant choice should reflect species with adaptations to warmer conditions. The best time of establishment is with the onset of the rainy season.

The main objective of successful plant establishment on a gabion is to supply sufficient nourishment and moisture. The faster the process of establishment, the sooner your plants will become self-sustaining.

Young plants should be gently planted in the narrow spaces between the rocks, or at the base of the structure, and compost and soil added.

Due to high permeability through the structure, watering should be at least daily, - with the exception, of course, of such succulent species as *Sarcostemma viminalis* and *Aloe ciliaris* - until the plants are established. An additional layer of compost or mulch will further combat moisture loss.

Once established, the plants will gradually become less dependent on watering. With regular pruning and training your embankments should be totally covered within a few years.

Pruning and maintenance.

In smaller private gardens where plants can be given individual attention and regular care and feeding, pruning and training, the walls could be totally obliterated in a few years – depending on the growth rate of the species used.

On a much larger scale and with no labour available the plants only need care in the first year or so.

Go natural, Go green, Go Gabions



Figure 6

Gabions provide a natural exchange of water, nutrients and sediments, which enhances vegetation establishment and growth.



Figure 7

No wall is too small or too big. The Gabion building blocks are flexible, permeable and durable making them suitable for any wall, anywhere.

This leaflet has been compiled in conjunction with Ernst van Jaarsveld, Kirstenbosch Gardens.



Photograph: Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens

Figure 5