

Learning English podcasts ... from the
Hellenic American Union©

Level: Intermediate
Lesson: 13
Title: "Balcony Gardening"

Summary:

Vanessa and Nick interview Tony who speaks about his balcony garden in Toronto.

In this episode Vanessa and Nick are in the middle of a live show in a radio studio. Listen carefully and answer the question that follows about the main idea of the conversation.

Dialogue:

Vanessa: Hey Nick, guess where I spend my vacation last summer – in Crete!!



Nick: Wow, lucky you, it must have been a **blast!**



Vanessa: It sure was! It was just gorgeous, especially all the flowers on my hotel balcony.

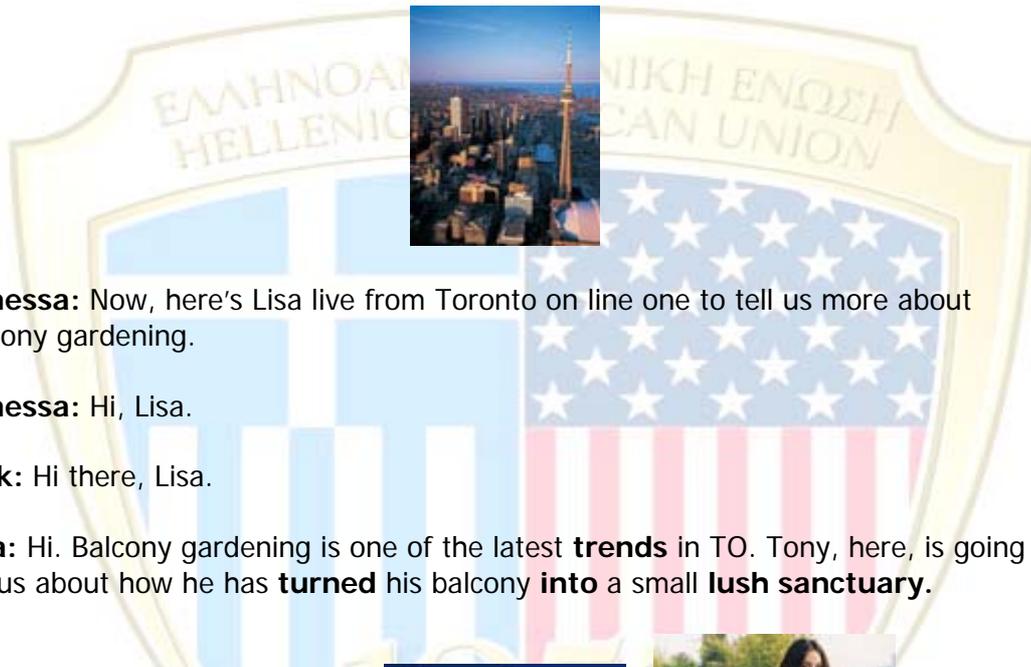


Nick: Why? **What was so special about it?**

Vanessa: Oh, it was just ... beautiful! There were so many different flowers and plants on it that it looked like... I don't know how to describe it to you... like the Garden of Eden in miniature maybe? There were lots of flowers we don't have here like jasmine, which smells great.



Nick: Wow, sounds wonderful! Balcony gardening is just getting started here in Toronto.



Vanessa: Now, here's Lisa live from Toronto on line one to tell us more about balcony gardening.

Vanessa: Hi, Lisa.

Nick: Hi there, Lisa.

Lisa: Hi. Balcony gardening is one of the latest **trends** in TO. Tony, here, is going to tell us about how he has **turned** his balcony **into** a small **lush sanctuary**.



Tony: Hi all. Well, because of the weather in Canada balcony gardening is probably not as easy as it might be in Greece. For starters my condo is **way up** on the 24th floor with a balcony facing north – strike one. Strike two is the fact we're so high up, so there's less moisture in the atmosphere. But even though my balcony is very small, I've still managed to create a pretty **impressive** garden. **All you need is patience and a green thumb.**



Lisa: You certainly seem to have both Tony. Back to you Vanessa and Nick.



Now answer the following question...

What are Vanessa, Lisa, Tony and Nick talking about?

They're talking about balcony gardening in Greece and in Toronto.

Now listen again to the dialogue in parts. After each part there will be 3 to 4 questions on the details...

Part 1

Vanessa: Hey Nick, guess where I spend my vacation last summer – in Crete!!

Nick: Wow, lucky you, it must have been a **blast!**

Vanessa: It sure was! It was just gorgeous, especially all the flowers on my hotel balcony.

Nick: Why? **What was so special about it?**

Vanessa: Oh, it was just ... beautiful! There were so many different flowers and plants on it that it looked like... I don't know how to describe it to you... like the Garden of Eden in miniature maybe? There were lots of flowers we don't have here like jasmine, which smells great.

Nick: **Wow, sounds wonderful!** Balcony gardening is just getting started here in Toronto.

Vanessa: Now, here's Lisa live from Toronto on line one to tell us more about balcony gardening.

Now answer some questions...

1. *Nick says: "Wow, lucky you, it must have been a **blast!**" What does "blast" mean?*

The word "blast" is used to describe an exciting experience or event.

2. *What does Nick express when he says: "**Wow, sounds wonderful!**"*

He expresses his surprise and pleasure.

3. *Why does Nick ask Vanessa: "**What was so special about it?**"*

Because he wants to find out more about Vanessa's hotel balcony on Crete.

Back at the radio studio again; Vanessa and Nick are talking to Lisa and Tony live from his condo in Toronto...

Part 2

Vanessa: Hi, Lisa.

Nick: Hi there, Lisa.

Lisa: Hi. Balcony gardening is one of the latest trends in TO. Tony, here, is going to tell us about how he has turned his balcony into a small lush sanctuary.

Tony: Hi all. Well, because of the weather in Canada balcony gardening is probably not as easy as it might be in Greece. For starters my condo is **way up** on the 24th floor with a balcony facing north – strike one. Strike two is the fact we're so high up, so there's less moisture in the atmosphere. But even though my balcony is very small, I've still managed to create a pretty **impressive** garden. **All you need is patience and a green thumb.**

Lisa: You certainly seem to have both Tony. Back to you Vanessa and Nick.

Now answer some questions...

1. Tony says: "...my condo is **way up** on the 24th floor..." What does "way up" mean?
Way up means high up.
2. Tony says: "But even though my balcony is very small, I've still managed to create a pretty **impressive** garden." What do you think "impressive" means?
When something is impressive it is so nice or beautiful that you admire it.
3. What does Tony mean when he says: "**All you need is patience and a green thumb.**"?
He means you need nothing else except patience and a talent for gardening.

Please visit our site at www.hau.gr to find the transcripts, explanations and activities.

GLOSSARY

Blast (noun): an exciting or enjoyable experience or event, often a party.
E.g. You should have come with us last night, we had a real blast!

Lush (adjective): (1) (of places, furniture, decoration, etc.) expensive and luxurious.
E.g. a lush carpet
(2) A lush area has a lot of green, healthy plants, grass and trees.
E.g. lush green valleys

Moisture (noun): water in very small drops. Most plants need moisture in order to grow. *E.g. Cactuses do not need a lot of moisture. That is why they are found in dry climates.*

Pretty (adverb): informally pretty is used to mean "quite."
E.g. The house has four bedrooms, so it's pretty big.

Sanctuary (noun): a safe place, one that offers protection, peace and quiet.
E.g. If I want some peace and quiet, I take sanctuary in my study.

Trend (noun): a change in a situation or in the way people see or do things.
*E.g. The trend at the moment is **towards** a more natural and less made-up look.*

Turn into (verb): to change something into something else.
E.g. Peter turned his basement into a pool room.

Way up (prepositional phrase): high up.
e.g. Can you see that plane, way up there?

CULTURAL INFORMATION

The word **condo** is an informal word for **condominium**. A **condo** in North America is an apartment whose owners also own the common areas of the building such as hallways, yards and other facilities.

Many American cities have nicknames. For example: New York: "The Big Apple", Detroit: "Mo Town", Los Angeles: "City of Angels" and Toronto: "TO".

Strike a word coming from baseball means disadvantage. So when we say "strike one..." we mean "the first disadvantage is." "Strike two" means "the second disadvantage", etc

ACTIVITIES

Activity 1

Practice using the words in the glossary. Choose the most appropriate word from the glossary to complete these sentences.

1. Mary's party was a _____! I had a fabulous time.
2. My daughter is _____excited about joining the school choir.
3. I sat on the park bench and I got wet. There was a lot of _____on it.
4. When I am stressed out, I take _____in my grandmother's house.
5. I have a cabin _____in the mountains.
6. Now that our son has moved out of the house, we're going to _____his bedroom into an office.
7. I wonder how she keeps her garden so beautiful and _____
8. Fur coats are not a popular _____ these days.

Activity 2

Join the sentences with "so" or "although". Make any necessary changes.

1. Maria had a lot to do. She decided to go jogging with her friends in the park.
2. On the way there, they changed their mind. They went to a café, instead.
3. The café was really crowded. They managed to find a place to sit.
4. They had a very good time. They promised each other to do it again soon.



KEY TO ACTIVITIES

Activity 1. 1. blast 2. quite 3. moisture 4. take 5. way up 6. turn 7. lush 8. trend

Activity 2. 1. Although Maria had a lot to do, she decided to go jogging. 2. On the way there, they changed their mind so they went to a café instead. 3. Although the café was really crowded they managed to find a place to sit. 4. They had a really good time so they promised each other to do it again.