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COVER PHOTOGRAPH
ROBERTA ASHLEY

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Editor's letter



Andrea x

I'M WRITING THIS FROM MY HOME OFFICE with the sun finally shining outside. What a relief after what seems like months of rain, wind and grey weather! That skin-warming, heart-lifting, smile-inducing feeling of summer is what we've brought to this issue, which definitely has its feet planted firmly in the garden as well as walking us through our homes.

Let's start with the readers' houses we've visited (from page 19). I love how they create that indoor-outdoor sensibility in such different ways, from the traditional conservatory in Vintage Charm to the contemporary glazing in Fields of Vision – both owners have considered the views outside as much as their beautiful interiors.

We have gardener and author Rachel de Thame welcoming us to her Cotswold plot (page 106), plus Sarah Raven's brilliant tips for shade-loving plants (page 146). And you'll find essential tips and ideas for outdoor kitchens, if you want to take al fresco living and dining to the next level (page 94).

Back inside, I'll be making the clay vessels shaped around balloons (page 110) and wondering about red stripes for a feature wall (page 78). Exciting!

Contributors

PHOTOGRAPHS ROBERTA ASHLEY, CLAIRE BINGHAM



ROBERTA ASHLEY was the photographer for our Vintage Charm house on page 34. 'I live in a small village in East Sussex. I absolutely love what I do; capturing so many beautiful homes is a huge privilege,' she says. 'I always come away from a shoot with fresh inspiration for my own home.'



HEATHER MARSHALL speaks to gardener Rachel de Thame on page 106. 'As a writer, I like being able to dive into a subject – I love being able to learn new things, and work is a great excuse for that!'

CLAIRE BINGHAM wrote and photographed the Fields of Vision house story, from page 20. 'Creating imagery is a thrill, and to bring it together with words makes the story complete.'



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News & stories



Sweet dreams...

Warmer temperatures mean it may be hard to drift off, but a few bedroom switch-ups can make all the difference. Stow away cosy throws and bring out crisp cotton sheets and lightweight fabrics in soft hues for a summery feel. And invest in a blackout blind, or at least a sleep mask, to stop the brighter nights keeping you awake. Harper bed linen collection, from £25, The White Company

BRAND OF THE MONTH



Cambridge Imprint

This artisan business uses traditional printing techniques to create patterned stationery and homeware with a lively, hand-drawn feel

Cambridge Imprint is very much a family enterprise. All artists by trade, sisters Jane Powell (a textile artist) and Ali Murphy (a ceramicist), and sister-in-law Claerwen James (a painter), decided to combine their creative skills in 2013. What started as a sideline has flourished into a full-time business, and their vibrant products are now sold in independent shops worldwide. Claerwen tells us more.

Where are you based?

We've recently moved into a light and airy studio space in an old converted mill in central Cambridge. Having spent a few years designing at our kitchen tables, it's been so nice

to work alongside one another again, trying out ideas that aren't constrained by space or the need to be tidy.

Why paper?

We wanted to make something for everyday use; to add texture and colour to fairly humdrum objects. Sustainability and provenance is also very important to us. Our paper is biodegradable and we print with eco vegetable oil-based inks.

Talk us through the design process.

All three of us use hand-drawing, hand-making, paints, scissors, glue and other pre-digital processes as they create a livelier result. The exception to this rule is an ancient photocopier – an incredibly useful design tool for quickly changing the scale or generating repeats. We hand-paint the designs onto a screen and screenprint the prototype in hand-mixed colours. Once finalised, the paper is lithoprinted in batches of 1,000 to 3,000 sheets of paper.

Who or what inspires you?

Early 20th-century hand-block designer makers, Phyllis Barron and Dorothy Larcher. Their patterns and colours were so simple and natural. We strive for that kind of quality in our work. We also refer to medieval and folk art.

In what way do your individual talents complement each other?

There's a healthy spirit of competition! When one of the others has made something particularly good, it spurs the others to greater endeavours. There's no one whose approval I value more, so working side by side in this way makes us more fruitful in all sorts of ways.

Sum up your style in three words.

Improvisatory, sober and joyful.
cambridgeimprint.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPH CORDELIA BERESFORD

From left Three-tier pendant, £235; Two-tier pendant, £197; Hatter pendant, £178; Deeply pendant, £306; Woven lamp, £166, all Golden Editions

Golden age

Barcelona-based design studio Golden Editions works with Ghanaian artisans to create beautiful lighting using traditional basket-weaving techniques. Available in a range of styles and colourways (including new-season Saffron and Teal), they will light up your home in more ways than one. golden-editions.com

SITTING PRETTY

The Cotswold Company has introduced three new designs to its upholstery collections, all in keeping with the brand's country-chic aesthetic and handmade in the UK. We love the Stewart and the Taylor for their traditional elegance, as well as the showstopping Jackson chaise. There are new fabrics to choose from, too, including luxurious velvet and classic herringbone. The Wedgwood Broadway Floral (shown here) has won our hearts. cotswoldco.com →



Taylor, from £1,499 for a large two-seater sofa in Wedgwood Broadway Floral

USEFUL AND BEAUTIFUL

Path homeware brings together beautiful, ethical products designed to be used and loved, mindfully sourced by founders (and sisters) Imogen Driver and Leonie Taibi. We've fallen for their signature floral cotton fabrics; block-printed by hand using organic inks, they're used to create cushions and kitchen textiles as well as dressing gowns, shopper bags and aprons. pathhomeware.com



Dressing gown, £85

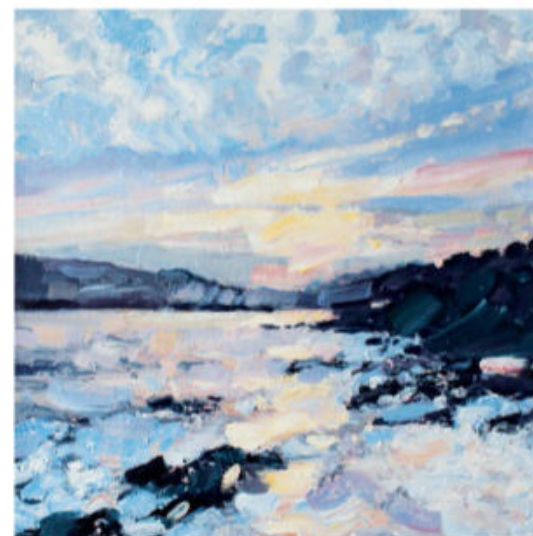
ONE FOR THE DIARY...

1-29 JUNE If you are in Cornwall this month, visit the Byre Gallery, situated on the Rame peninsula – a striking landscape of creeks, sandy beaches and farmland, it's often called 'Cornwall's forgotten corner'. In celebration of the gallery's 10th anniversary, visitors have submitted their favourite coastal views to inspire local artists. The resulting paintings, ceramics and jewellery are on show from 1-29 June. Can't make it? View the show online, thebyregallery.co.uk ➔



BRIGHT HORIZONS

Looking to bring colour into your garden, as well as your home? Mylands paints has teamed up with British landscape gardener Jinny Blom to create a new palette, suitable for use outside and in. There are 12 hues to choose from, a mix of light and dark tones, centred around one hero shade, Blomster; a deep red inspired by Jinny's time living in Denmark. 'Red in a Scandinavian landscape is a shot of punctuation. The sun in winter hits the red roofs and walls of small farmhouses with its crisp light,' she explains. Prices start at £31 for 1ltr Marble matt emulsion, mylands.com

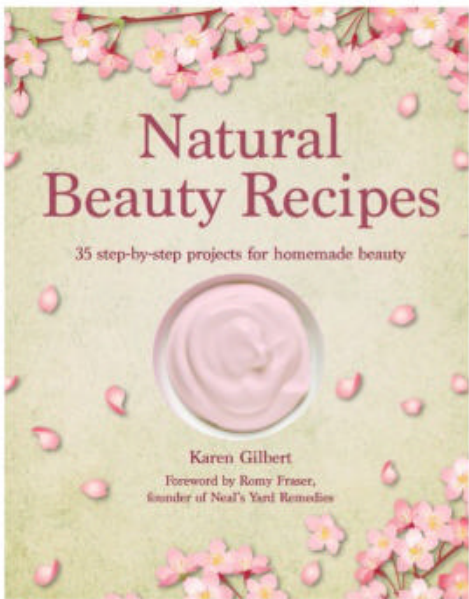


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SELF CARE

Most of us use them every day, but do we understand what’s in our shop-bought beauty products? Even the most ‘natural’ often contain sneaky sulfates that do our skin more harm than good. In *Natural Beauty Recipes* (£14.99, Ryland Peters & Small), Karen Gilbert – a skincare expert based in the New Forest who has helped create many of Neal’s Yard Remedies’ award-winning formulas – shows how to make your own. Discover step-by-step guides for 35 beauty essentials, including moisturising butters and balms for your face, hair and body.



BEHIND THE SCENES

Visionary designer Kit Kemp has joined forces with fabric and wallpaper brand GP&J Baker, giving designs from its archive a modern twist. Whimsical prints, embroideries and large-scale murals steal the show, while artisanal stripes and plain linens complete the line-up. ‘The collection is a joyous celebration of ideas and reflects a true shared passion for fantastic textiles and wallpapers,’ says Ann Grafton, managing and creative director, GP&J Baker.



LET’S DANCE

Somerset-based designer Annika Reed uses woodblock printing to create colourful designs for those who love ‘a life less ordinary’. Her latest collection, *Dancing Queen*, is a jubilant interpretation of the liveliness of dance, channelled into six standout wallpapers. ‘Picture a traditional stripe putting on its dancing shoes and twirling with unrestrained joy, leaving behind a trail of rhythmic patterns that dance harmoniously across your walls,’ says Annika. Printed onto FSC-certified paper using eco-friendly inks, a 10m roll costs £170. annikareed.com

Bay-Cay organic cotton top in Ecru and Golden Tan, £85; Samudra-Cay organic cotton shorts in Ecru and Golden Tan, £90, Beaumont Organic

Aukai organic cotton top in Black, £55, Beaumont Organic

Aukai organic top in White, £55; Mazu organic cotton trousers in Rust, £140, Beaumont Organic

In check

Conscious of fast fashion's impact on the environment, Beaumont Organic uses sustainable fabrics to create just two collections a year, with every piece designed to last (with free repairs). For a summer outfit, our pick is this loose-fitting check co-ord. Made from 100 per cent organic cotton, it will keep you feeling and looking cool on hot days. beaumontorganic.com

TIME WELL SPENT...

PLAN the perfect plot with Fryd, an app that helps you get the best out of your growing space while connecting with fellow garden enthusiasts, fryd.app

MEET The Curtain Trader – Sam Bell sources second-hand curtains, made with new and vintage fabrics from the likes of Designers Guild and Colefax & Fowler. She also offers an alteration service. Visit her shop in Hele, Devon, or browse stock online, thecurtaintrader.co.uk

LEARN the art of flower arranging in a one-day workshop (1 June, 10am-4pm, £152 including materials) at the Bristol Folk House; other courses on offer include lino printing and quilt making; bristolfolkhouse.co.uk



Lilypad floral mug,
£14, Anthropologie

Ceramic daisy
vase, £19.50, M&S

Floral tea light holders,
£39.95 set of three,
The Wisteria Tree

Viola teapot,
£88, Skye
McAlpine
Tavola

Ceramic vase,
£60, Fig 1

WE LOVE...

Flower-shop. ceramics

This season sees a bouquet of floral designs to choose from. Colourful and kitsch, they're the perfect pick for summer tables. Mix and match for a showstopping display or keep it understated with a few well-chosen pieces, just as you would when arranging fresh blooms.

Candle holder,
£8.99,
Gisela Graham

Poppy plate,
£25, Spicer
& Wood

Petal dishes,
£5 each,
National Trust

Lily of the
Valley breakfast
cup and saucer,
£82, Mrs Alice

Maria Flor
cake stand,
£52, Frankbros



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Dream homes



Cloakroom swagger

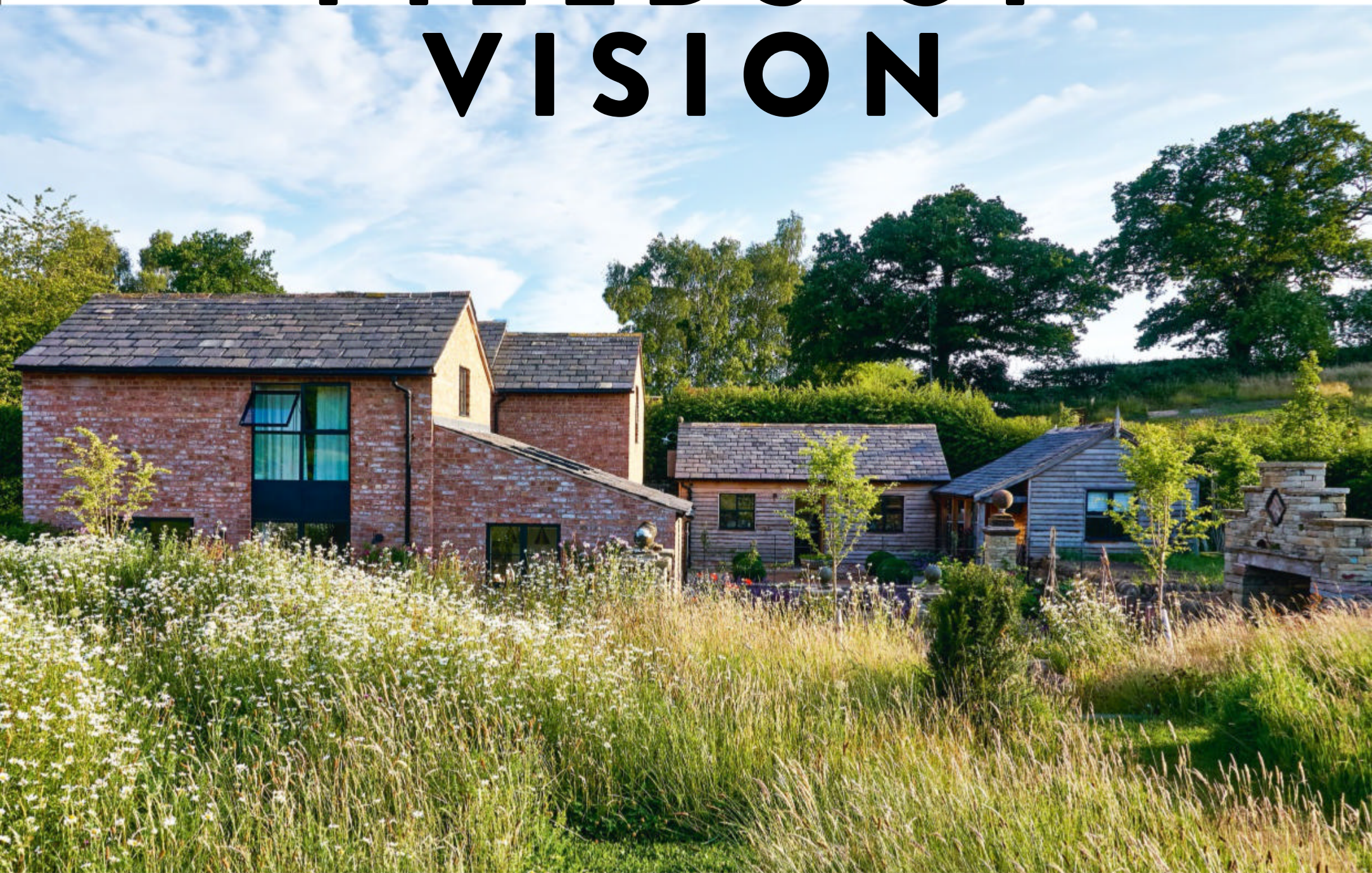
We all know that bijou bathrooms are ripe for bold and colourful design, AKA cloakroom swagger. Matching the loo wallpaper to the living room upholstery takes the idea of decorative flow to a whole new level, but doesn't it look brilliant in this home, where the Pierre Frey Pommes de Pin motif shows up from room to room? Turn to page 62 to see the full house feature.



EXTERIOR The oxeye daisies give volume and shape above the meadow's retaining wall, built using local Macclesfield stone. The ground was disturbed by the build, so Janine threw in the wildflower seeds to restore it

MEADOW A winding meadow path created by Janine wends its way through to the house, which has views back across the garden. Janine has planted *Crataegus laevigata* 'Rosea Flore Pleno', a hawthorn with double pink flowers

FIELDS OF VISION



At garden designer Janine Crimmins's country home, nature sets the scene, surrounding two once-derelict barns that have been beautifully reinvented in a contemporary style

F

or their modern farmhouse, built where two derelict barns dating from 1850 once stood, Janine Crimmins and her husband Andrew Loudon were keen to create a synergy between the heritage of the former brick buildings and the meadow landscape. So they devised a harmonious inside-outside design and decorated with a nature-inspired palette that suits the property's location amid three acres of Cheshire countryside.

Living here is all about the views, with every door and window placement carefully considered. For instance, the bedroom window is aligned so it is opposite the bed. The outside is brought into the living room by opening the large, aluminium-framed doors to the terrace. Janine says: 'With my gardens, I think in terms of vistas, light and symmetry. For a property, you have to correlate views with the furniture inside.'

At the glass-walled entrance, brick has been left exposed, so the new building echoes the look of what used to be two separate barns. Reclaimed Welsh slate is used for the roof, and elsewhere, they reused original stone roofing and sandstone found on site. Chevron-patterned parquet on the ground floor lends further rusticity, although they opted for Karndean vinyl flooring instead of wood; 'We chose for longevity,' Janine explains.

Janine and Andrew are uniquely placed to build the house; she being a garden designer, and he an expert dry-stone waller. They met 22 years ago at RHS Tatton Flower Show and today regularly collaborate on garden design and construction projects. But none quite on this scale.

'We bought the property in August 2019 and moved into a caravan during the build,' Janine recalls. 'Planning permission was in place by December and then we were up and running.' They eventually moved in on Valentine's Day 2021.

All the rooms are set up for family life (Janine and Andrew have four

daughters between them from previous marriages, all now in their twenties), from the kitchen-diner where the family can gather together, to the three good-sized bedrooms. This lends a modest atmosphere that is homely, and not too big. 'We were constricted by what we started with,' Janine says. 'But we didn't embark on this as a development to make money from. It was built to live in and enjoy.'

With the interior, the couple went down a traditional country house route, preferring timeless design over sleek modernity. Furniture from their previous home found new positions and the palette is kept neutral – the only concession to a bold shade is the dining area painted in Farrow & Ball's Mouse's Back, Andrew's favourite colour.

In the living room is a 1960s Heals sideboard in rosewood, next to a retro leather and chrome chair and a gold lamp. In the dining room, an inherited 17th-century oak chest belonging to Janine's great grandfather is combined with Georgian dining table and chairs, and paired with a Shaker-style kitchen with cream quartz worktops. The overall effect is effortlessly functional but serene.

The couple sourced many of the furnishings from antique shops online or reclamation yards, including a stone column

that Andrew made from a Georgian stone roller. As you do. 'They look so nice but they're not much money as people don't know what to do with them,' says Janine. 'The column gives you a vista. If you stand with your back to the garage, it gives a view through all the gateways of the garden and leads your eye to the field.' To the meadow – the inspiration behind it all.

janinecrimmins.com



AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Janine Crimmins, garden designer, lives here with her husband Andrew Loudon, a dry-stone walling Master Craftsman.

HOUSE A barn conversion comprising three bedrooms, living room, kitchen-diner and bathroom, set in a wildflower meadow in Over Alderley.



KITCHEN-DINER Janine and Andrew's home is filled with favourite heirloom pieces. The panelled **dining area** is painted in Farrow & Ball's Mouse's Back, Andrew's favourite colour. **Table lamp**, John Lewis & Partners

CHESHIRE FARMHOUSE

KITCHEN-DINER Antique pieces, wooden panelling and a herringbone floor give the farmhouse a timeless aesthetic. The **dining chairs** and **table** are Georgian. **Table lamps**, John Lewis & Partners



‘The building is new, but for the interiors, we chose a traditional country look and a palette inspired by the meadow outside. We were happy to find places for the furniture we brought from our previous home’





LIVING ROOM Placement of the windows was carefully considered when the couple planned the build to make the most of the views. **Sofas**, Neptune. **Side table**, Vinterior. Retro-style **chair**, John Lewis & Partners

GARDEN A courtyard festooned with purple *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low' (cat mint) leads to the kitchen-diner. Janine likes to plant it in quantity: 'It looks striking as it's all one thing and flowers for so long!'

KITCHEN-DINER Modern details combine with classic design for a stylish country scheme. Shaker-style **kitchen**, Neptune. For similar **stools**, try Garden Trading. Try Dowsing & Reynolds for **handles and knobs**







EXTERIOR Reclaimed pieces such as the sandstone obelisks, surrounded by *Dianthus* 'Flashing Lights', line the paths in the courtyard, adding architectural interest and an aged look that fits with the history of the barns

ENTRANCE As you enter the house, the walls are exposed brick. The Parisian Holophane **street lamp** is from Cooling & Cooling in Tarporley. For a similar **urn planter**, try your local reclamation yard

JANINE'S COUNTRY LIFE

MY FAVOURITE VIEW 'Standing with my back to the garage and looking through the different rooms of the garden down to the column stone.'

LESSONS LEARNT 'To trust my judgement and research everything. You can take advice from experts but sometimes they're not all they seem.'

WHERE TO VISIT 'Locally, the garden of Arley Hall in Northwich (arleyhallandgardens.com) is lovely for the herbaceous borders.'

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'Being outside with the wildlife. We sit out and listen to the birds in the day, while at night, the bats and owls fly over. It's such a beautiful feeling to be surrounded by nature. It's a haven.'



CHESHIRE FARMHOUSE

BEDROOM Floral prints tie the scheme to the meadow garden it overlooks. The **chests of drawers** are Georgian, found online. **Bed throw**, John Lewis & Partners. **Curtains**, Sanderson. Try Feather & Black for a similar **bed frame**



WILD FRONTIERS

Blend calming colours with warm woods to emulate Janine's look



1 A GROUNDED GREEN Pullman Green 1829 Vintage Collection chalky emulsion, £45 for 2.5ltr, Craig and Rose **2 SOLID BRASS DETAIL** Small Dexter pendant light, £113, Pooky **3 CURVED FRONT** Winchcombe Dark Oak four over three chest of drawers, £999, Cotswold Company **4 VIBRANT MUSTARD YELLOW** Velvet table lamp in Mustard, £110, Barker and Stonehouse **5 WARM HONEY TONES** Mascot Rustic 420mm herringbone, £45.95sq m, Havwoods

6 DORMITORY-STYLE DESIGN Oliver bed in Black, £499 for a double, Feather & Black **7 ORGANIC BEAUTY** Whispering Grass cushion in Olive, £45, Clarissa Hulse **8 TIMELESS RETRO SHAPE** Nevada Brown leather two-seat sofa, £2,550, Rose & Grey **9 PRINTED BY HAND** Sophia Green fabric, £146m, Cathy Nordström **10 SMOOTH, SADDLE SEAT** Hatton wooden bar stool in Natural, £119, Cult Furniture

Walls painted in Gosh Golly.



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VINTAGE CHARM

An elegant Edwardian home in Shropshire boasts a serene interior, enriched with French vintage charm, curated art and a cutting garden that is a riotous cornucopia of colour

DINING AREA The conservatory provides the perfect place to dine, with views and access to the garden. **Walls** in Shadow White, Farrow & Ball. **Table**, Miles Griffiths Antiques. **Chairs**, eBay



ransforming a house into a home is an evolutionary process, so when Jane Davies and her husband Martin purchased this pretty period property in the market town of Oswestry in 2002, they knew it would change in the years ahead. With three children, ranging in age from two months to six years, any house destined to be their forever home had to deliver big, even if it meant moving in and promptly moving out again for essential works to be done.

‘The whole house needed rewiring and gas heating installed,’ explains Jane, ‘so we had to move out for a couple of weeks for all the floorboards to be taken up. It was a mess and very stressful with three young children!’ But she had been bowled over by the property’s period features, and knew the disturbance would be worth it. ‘We loved the original stained-glass windows at the front, the front door and the original staircase in the hallway,’ she says. A large garden, full of potential, sealed the deal.

Jane and Martin took a slow but meticulous approach to updating each room, using their time and funds carefully. ‘We had to strip all the wallpaper as the whole house needed replastering, which we did as and when we had time,’ Jane says. One of the most striking improvements is in the hallway, where the couple discovered the original pine parquet and tiled floor while ripping out the old bright red carpet. ‘The parquet had been stained black so we stripped it back and I painstakingly cleaned the tiles, which took forever as they had layers of black carpet glue that was so stubborn to remove. It took weeks of time and patience,’ she says, reminiscing about the level of dedication involved. Replacement tiles were sourced at local salvage yards to fill the gaps and the floor was restored to its original glorious form.

A conservatory was added to enhance what was a cramped kitchen, somewhat diminutive in size and unworkable in many ways. ‘It was difficult to fit five people around the

table, so we knocked through an external kitchen window and built the conservatory onto the kitchen. The conservatory also linked to the living room, which created a marvellous sense of space and natural light in the house. It has been great for parties over the years, too!’

Today, the house is a haven for Jane’s love of all things vintage and antique, with a seriously strong French influence, borne out of years of happy holidays spent in France, often with an extra, empty suitcase ready to pack with newfound treasures. And it is all beautifully curated against a backdrop of white and pale neutrals; a far cry, she admits, from the colours she decorated with when they first moved in. ‘Initially, I went wild with colour – a dark green hallway, mustard bathroom and terracotta kitchen.

But as time has passed, I’ve created a more neutral palette and added colour through my love of art and antiques instead,’ she says.

The garden outside clearly has an influence, too. It is a riot of colour, from pinks and purples, to oranges and yellows, so the softly toned interior delivers a sense of calm. And, of course, Jane’s beautiful antique pieces offer up places to display bunches of homegrown cosmos, cornflowers, Nigella, larkspur, sweet peas, roses and dahlias in

vintage confit jars, elegant Astier de Villatte vases and rusty zinc pots, weathered with time and picked up for a song in French brocantes. ‘My parents loved antique fairs and auctions, so it was in my blood from the get-go,’ Jane says. ‘I just enjoy collecting and mixing old and new art, ceramics and furniture. It’s all about creating a comfortable home that can be enjoyed aesthetically at the same time.’ Amen to that!



AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Jane Davies and husband Martin who both work for their equine business Medequus, and children Hannah, Huw and Florence, when home from university.

HOUSE A detached four-bedroom Edwardian property, built circa 1910.



KITCHEN Jane loves to find vintage pieces and has picked up many on trips to French brocantes. Try Goose Home and Garden for a range of vintage furniture, crockery, pots and other **kitchenware**



KITCHEN Handmade Zellige tiles add a soft splash of colour to the kitchen. **Walls** in Shadow White, Farrow & Ball. **Blind** in Designers Guild linen, made locally by Lewis and Holmes. **Tiles**, Mosaic Factory



HALLWAY The hallway boasts some wonderful architectural features, including the original ornately patterned tiled floor, which makes a great focal point as you enter the house. For similar floor tiles, try London Mosaic

‘I just enjoy collecting, mixing and displaying old and new art, ceramics and furniture. It’s all about creating a comfortable home that can be lived in but enjoyed aesthetically at the same time’





SITTING ROOM The sitting room was once two rooms but has been opened up into one, filling the space with light. **Walls** in Strong White, Farrow & Ball. **Sofas**, sofa.com. For similar artwork, try Medium Room

SITTING ROOM An eye-catching gallery wall of favourite artwork and prints adds colour and definition. Apothecary drawers, Miles Griffiths Antiques. Ceramics, Astier de Villatte





SITTING ROOM It's a great room for entertaining and Jane has decorated it with a mix of comfortable furniture and intricate decorative antiques. Try your local antiques fair to find similar **furniture** and accessories

GARDEN A greenhouse was on Jane's wish list for the garden for several years. **Greenhouse** in Silver/Sage, Rhino. Jane buys **seeds** regularly from @bishybarnabeescottagegarden and @milliprout

JANE'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'We are located on the border of Powys and Shropshire, in the country but within walking distance to a small market town. During lockdown, we walked for miles through fields and footpaths, and were fortunate to enjoy the freedom and fresh air of the countryside.'

WHERE TO VISIT 'I love going up to Lake Vrynwy (lake-vyrnwy.com) and walking or cycling around or having a picnic there in the summer.'

WHERE TO HAVE A MEAL 'The Old School House (@oldschoolhouseoswestry) which is in the grounds of St Oswald's Church in a gorgeous Grade II listed building. I especially like their blueberry pancakes!'

WHERE TO SHOP 'We also have an award-winning bakery called Niche (@niche_patisserie) where they make the most amazing croissants ever!'



BATHROOM A luxurious freestanding bath makes a strong design statement. **Walls** in Trade White, Dulux. **Bath and taps**, Burlington Bathrooms. **Jars and shells**, Nook Antiques. Similar wall **cabinet**, Ardingly Antiques

MAIN BEDROOM The main bedroom is calm and serene with rich yellow adding a burst of energy to the all-white scheme. **Walls** in Trade White, Dulux. **Bedlinen**, Bedfolk. **Lamps**, Decorative Antiques

FEATURE SARA EMSLIE
PHOTOGRAPHS ROBERTA ASHLEY



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Mix natural textures, fresh stripes and flea market finds to channel Jane's style



FEATURE ALICE HUMPHRYS

1 WINDOW-STYLE FRAME Framed pressed flower prints, £395 set of twelve, Oka **2 A SPARKLING SHOWSTOPPER** Laura Ashley Aanaïs five-light chandelier champagne crystal, £190, Dar Lighting **3 CLASSIC TICKING** Cushion in Black ticking with Olive velvet piping, £95, Tori Murphy **4 HAND-THROWN POTTERY** Stoneware berry colander, £39, Rowen & Wren **5 PERIOD PORCELAIN** Melville Red patterned tiles, £56.69sq m, Porcelain Superstore **6 TOP TABLE** Jute

placemat, £6.50; Delilah block print organic cotton napkin in Cedar, £8, Path Homeware **7 MULTI-DIRECTIONAL** Dale table lamp in Antique Brass, £224, Mullan Lighting **8 HAND-CARVED DOORS** Stephanie two-door sideboard, £720, Perch and Parrow **9 RED-BASED NEUTRAL** Joa's White estate emulsion, £57.50 for 2.5ltr, Farrow & Ball **10 WOVEN FROM PALM LEAF** Bohemia mini Valencia basket in Black, £32, Bohemia Design

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ALL IN THE MIX

Moroccan style meets the English countryside in Alison Coldridge's fairytale-pretty 'gingerbread' gatehouse

SITTING ROOM Curated art and ceramics in terracotta create a striking note against the warm neutral backdrop. Walls in Lilac Pink, Edward Bulmer. **Ceiling lamp**, Home Barn. **Wiggle table lamp**, Maud Vaughan Interiors

The phrase ‘third time lucky’ rings true for Alison Coldridge and her husband Simone, as she recalls the ups and downs of house hunting. They endured their first and second choices falling through before finally succeeding with a period gatehouse not far from the Hampshire town of Winchester. ‘We had our hearts set on a three-bed maisonette and put in an offer immediately after visiting.’ Sadly, it was declined and the couple had to look again. ‘But it made us consider Winchester as an option,’ Alison adds, describing the appeal of this idyllic part of the country, with its ‘happy, healthy community, good schools, beautiful architecture, history and green spaces’.

They pursued a second property nearby and the offer was accepted. But when the survey highlighted concerns, the pair pulled out and started all over again. Finally, a house came on the market that instantly won them over with its fairytale appeal. ‘The exterior reminded me of a gingerbread house,’ says Alison. Their offer was accepted and finally, the family was able to move.

Built in the mid-1800s, the property boasts a charming brick-and-flint construction with a gabled roof and arched detailing on the windows. An intriguing configuration of rooms downstairs means that each leads directly into the next – the perfect set-up when juggling family life, with a toddler and baby sister in tow. ‘The step-free flow downstairs means that while cooking, we can see our daughters playing in the living room,’ Alison explains. ‘The layout was the reason this property was overlooked by many other house hunters, so we were able to get it at a steal!’

The entrance hall leads you to the sitting room, then into the kitchen, and finally to the informal living room, which is in the extension with doors opening onto the wraparound patio garden. ‘It suits us perfectly’, Alison says. ‘Because one room flows into another downstairs, it’s great for entertaining. Adults gather in the

kitchen, catching up over drinks, while children race from room to room and, in the summer months, we spill out into the garden through the French doors in the living room.’

Each room is also connected by the playful exuberance of the decoration. Soft tonal hues, natural textures and splashes of pattern are interspersed with vintage pieces. Plaster-pink walls beautifully enhance the honey tones of the stripped pine doors, as well as the woven baskets and rugs. What is most striking is the floor, where stripped pine floorboards have been painstakingly elaborated with a chequerboard design, thanks to some white floor paint, several rolls of masking tape, and hours of work by Simone. ‘When we first moved in, we pulled up tired carpets and were delighted to find solid-wood flooring hidden underneath,’ Alison says.

The couple’s love of travel comes through in the interiors, evocative of bazaars in Marrakesh and beyond. ‘My taste is influenced by Morocco and the Middle East,’ explains Alison. ‘It’s where Simone, who is Italian, spent his childhood and I lived for a few years with him after university.’ But there is also a gentle English floral feel, with framed botanical prints, painted antique furniture and flowery fabrics, all collected over the years and echoing the wildflower

planting outside. It works a treat, keeping the visual conversation alive throughout and, together with the art, books and ceramics on display, adds an extra layer of personality.

‘A brilliant piece of advice was given to me by my mother-in-law, Giuse Maggi, who is an artist with impeccable taste. She told me to keep the walls neutral and let our rugs, books and artwork do the talking,’ Alison smiles. Wise words indeed!



AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Alison Coldridge, a lifestyle editor, husband Simone and daughters Olive and Alba.

HOUSE The former 1800s gatehouse has an entrance hall, sitting room, kitchen-diner, living room (in extension), five bedrooms and a bathroom.



ENTRANCE HALL A bold chequerboard floor design cleverly anchors the space and links it with the sitting room beyond. **Floor** painted in Slaked Lime, Little Greene. **Cane radiator cover**, Wood Edit

ENTRANCE HALL This welcoming and generously sized space includes an original fireplace, with an alcove perfect for Alison to display her basket collection. **Peg rail** and **boot rack**, Wood Edit

EXTERIOR Charming detail decorates the gables of the period brick-and-flint gatehouse, while the walled patio garden provides plenty of space for the family to entertain friends during the summer months

ENTRANCE HALL There's space here for a handy bench, while framed pressed-flower prints and a floral cushion add a gentle note. **Cafe curtain**, East London Cloth. Similar **bench**, Decorative Antiques



KITCHEN-DINER Glimpsed beyond this country-inspired space is Alison's collection of vintage artist's palettes. Reclaimed-wood **dining table**, Packhouse, Surrey. Try Natterbox **dining chair**, Loaf

KITCHEN-DINER Alison has created a charming display of antique textiles hung from a wooden wall rack, alongside vintage finds. Browse English Salvage for **kitchenalia**. Similar antique **textiles**, The Cloth Shop





EXTERIOR During the warmer weather, the family like to spend time in the secluded walled garden. Vintage-style benches suit the period setting perfectly. Seneca **cushion cover** in Orange, £75, Oka, is similar

LIVING ROOM A large sofa in a warm spice shade and a textural vintage cupboard enhance the relaxed bohemian style here. **Sofa**, Loaf. Similar **baskets**, Hadedra. Similar **cupboard**, Petersham Nurseries



BATHROOM Another vintage find of Alison's is put to good use for storing bathing essentials and displaying other treasures. **Cabinet**, Packhouse, Surrey. White enamel **candle holder**, Kelvin Apothecary, is similar.

BATHROOM A freestanding roll-top bath takes centre stage in this sizeable space. For a similar **bath**, try The Albion Bath Company. Putney wall **light**, Jim Lawrence. Cornelia oval **mirror**, Exclusive Mirrors, is similar





‘There’s a gentle English floral feel in the bedrooms, with painted antique furniture, flowery fabrics and framed botanical prints, collected over the years and echoing the wildflower planting outside’



CHILD'S BEDROOM Antique beds, floral quilts and a collection of vintage toys create a cosy retreat. Twin **beds**, Bedsteads UK. Similar **quilts**, Camomile London. Try Tangier Scrunchie **lampshade**, Alice Palmer

GUEST BEDROOM An elegant iron four-poster adds simple sophistication to this minimal space, accentuated by the neutral-pink wall colour. **Walls** in Stony Plaster, Atelier Ellis. **Bed**, Original Bed Company



GUEST BEDROOM Crisp white bedlinen with pretty floral detail enhances the simple country theme. Sophie Conran has scalloped bedlinen. **Cupboard**, Hambledon Home. Try Hester **table lamp**, Rowen and Wren

ALISON'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES Having a picnic with friends in Winchester beside the water meadows of the River Itchen, followed by a paddle.

WHERE TO VISIT Mottisfont, a National Trust property near Romsey in Hampshire, is a favourite for us on a summer's day. We love to see the roses in the walled garden and take a walk along the river.

WHERE TO HAVE A MEAL For a pub lunch, you can't beat the Tichborne Arms (tichbornearms.com) near Alresford in the rolling Hampshire countryside. It has the most beautiful pub garden I've ever visited.

WHERE TO SHOP The Hambledon (thehambledon.com) in Winchester is a brilliant, fashionable and independent department store.



ARTISTIC LICENCE

Combine blush pinks, kilim prints and vintage linens for Alison's calming look



FEATURE ALICE HUMPHRYS

1 FLORAL MOTIF Aurélie White mango wood chest of drawers, £595, Oliver Bonas **2 DELICATE SHADE** Bell Pink true matt emulsion, £58 for 2.5ltr, Atelier Ellis **3 KILIM STYLE** Nomad Letoon rug made from recycled plastic, from £195, Weaver Green **4 MADE IN MOROCCO** Round palm tray, from £26, BasketBasket **5 HANDCRAFTED CERAMIC** Flora hand-painted jug, £58, Fiona May at Rowen and

Wren **6 MINIMALIST STYLE** Eliana metal canopy four-poster king-size bed, £545, Sweetpea & Willow **7 TEXTURED MATT FINISH** Witton Noce stone-effect floor tiles in Beige, £19.96sq m, Walls and Floors **8 SUSTAINABLE CHOICE** Chunni mango wood chopping board, £35, After Noah **9 SPILL-RESISTANT LINEN** Pudding sofa in Dried Rose clever laundered linen, £2,795, Loaf



PRETTY IN PINK

A playful palette, lively patterns and fanciful flourishes bring zest and wit to Sean Symington's Victorian terrace, providing a masterclass in joyful interior design



KITCHEN Sean wanted to keep the Bath stone fire surround, so he opted for alcove units on either side. Custom **cabinetry** in Setting Plaster, Farrow & Ball. Marble **flooring**, Mandarin Stone. Range **cooker**, Lofra



‘The house reflects my personal aesthetic

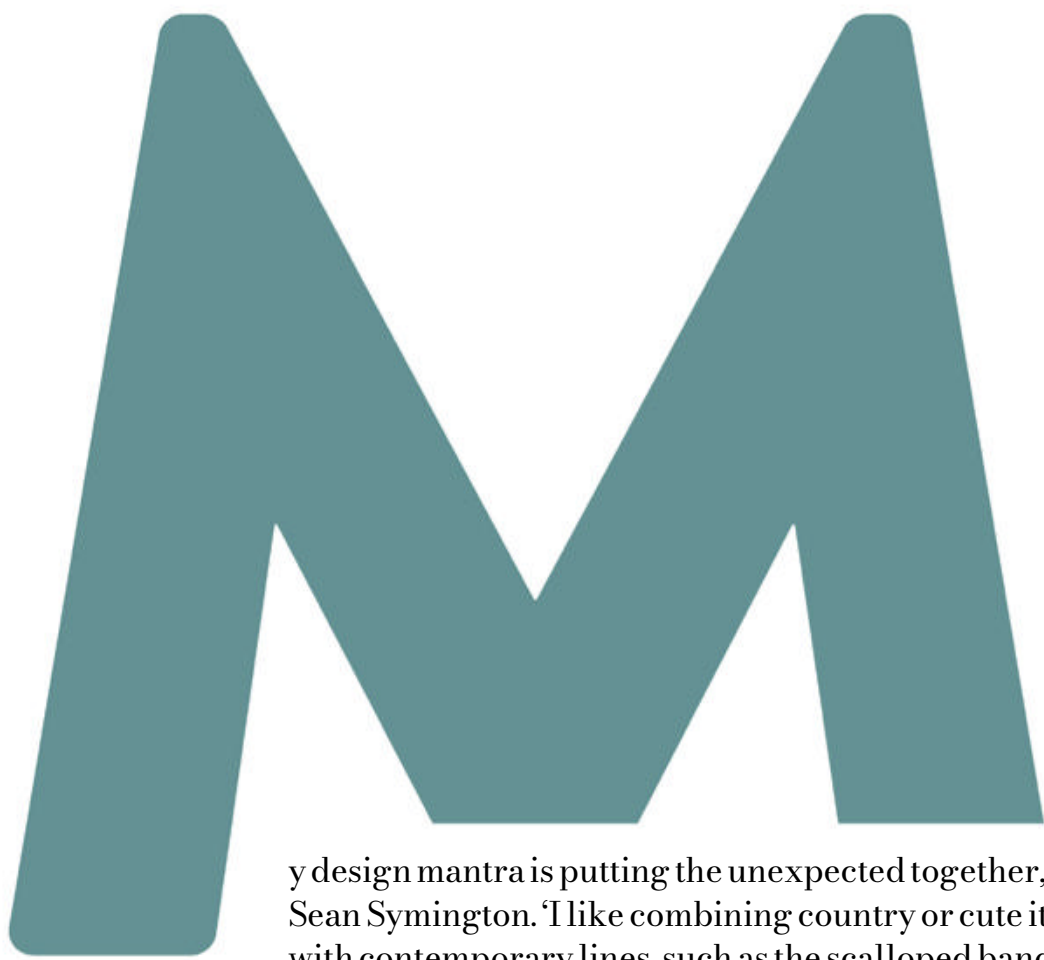
– I’m not afraid of colour and pattern

and I wanted my home to be an example

of how you can push boundaries’

DINING AREA A scalloped banquette in pretty gingham breaks up the slick lines of the extension and introduces a playful element. Fish art **TV**, Samsung. **Wall light**, Vaughan. **Banquette** in fabric by Romo





y design mantra is putting the unexpected together,' says Sean Symington. 'I like combining country or cute items with contemporary lines, such as the scalloped banquette and tulip table in my kitchen-diner. I love the contrast.'

The interior designer's Victorian terrace in Bath is awash with the unexpected. The kaleidoscopic interior is a far cry from his first viewing, when it was a dingy student house with a bed in virtually every room. 'I knew it would scare people because it needed lots of work,' Sean says. 'It was all very closed – even the corridor had a door. I didn't know the sitting room had a fireplace because there was a chest of drawers in front of it.'

Also offputting was a 1970s lean-to and a bathroom off the kitchen that the students shared. But Sean could see the house's promise. 'I knew I could open it up,' he says. His instinct, however, was to keep the sitting room separate, as he likes to have a defined formal room.

Making the most of the space was key. The house was reconfigured, with the ground-floor bathroom replaced by a cloakroom and utility, while a bedroom upstairs was partitioned to create a new bathroom. 'It allowed us to have more rooms but not compromise the space,' Sean says. The lean-to was replaced with an airy part glass-roofed extension which involved digging down to increase ceiling height, while a loft conversion provides a bright bedroom at the top of the house. The main bedroom features a wall of wardrobes, but the layout caused difficulties. Sean wanted to position the bed in front of the chimney breast, freeing up a wall for storage, saying: 'We had to widen the chimney breast to accommodate a king-size bed.'

The beating heart of the home is undoubtedly the kitchen-dining-living area. 'The kitchen needed the most love as it was dark and cold, but we were able to create one big open area,' explains Sean. The Bath stone

fire surround is a hero feature and frames the range, but it meant Sean was limited on what else he could do with the space. 'We tried to pack in as much storage as possible.' Offering a worktop as well as drawers, the generous island also houses the dishwasher and sink. Alcove units on either side of the range, concealing a microwave and coffee station, open to another of Sean's surprises. 'I painted the interior a deep red to give it that punch of colour when the doors are open. I like that unexpectedness.'

Colour and pattern are an integral part of Sean's style and he was keen for the palettes to flow throughout. 'The whole house is pinks, blues and greens,' he notes. The sitting room is a modern twist on stately-home style, embracing a bold backdrop of blue walls, interspersed with pastel pinks and peppered with playful prints, all overseen by the portrait of a commanding Georgian gentleman.

The extension, meanwhile, is a symphony of colour and pattern that focuses on pinks and blues and features a striking chequerboard floor. The pattern-laden dining and sitting areas are offset with warm white walls, while an eye-catching fish artwork turns out to be a TV. Sean has cleverly linked the hero Pierre Frey fabric motif through to the cloakroom, where it is showcased as a statement wallpaper. This careful curation and skilful colour and pattern blending have ensured the end result is a small but perfectly formed interior.

seansymington.com

AT HOME WITH

OWNERS Sean Symington, interior designer, lives here with his partner Panos Maghsoudlou and their cavapoo, Penny.

HOUSE A Victorian terrace comprising kitchen/dining room, sitting room, drawing room, utility room, four bedrooms and two bathrooms.



SOMERSET HOUSE



LIVING AREA 'We spend a lot of time in here,' says Sean of this space, which has heaps of storage. **Sofa**, Sofa.com. **Chair and cushion** in Pommes de Pin, Pierre Frey; **fringing**, Samuel & Sons. **Wall light**, Pooky. **Shade**, Fermoie







SITTING ROOM Sean introduced texture with a grasscloth wallpaper. The portrait was sourced from a dealer. **Wallcovering** in Tantalising Teal, Phillip Jeffries. **Woodwork** in Sugar Bag Light, Farrow & Ball

BEDROOM The hero in this scheme is the floral fabric, while structural supports were clad in timber for a country touch. **Sofa, curtains and cushion** in fabric by Pierre Frey. **Walls** in Lilac Pink, Edward Bulmer Natural Paint



MAIN BEDROOM The headboard fabric is a favourite of Sean's so he added the matching half canopy for a fun finish. **Headboard and canopy** in Tiger Palm, Schumacher; lined with fabric by GP & J Baker

MAIN BEDROOM 'We invested in window treatments and upholstery. I had fun playing with gorgeous textiles and fringes as they play such an important part in the feel of the house.' **Walls** in Red Earth, Farrow & Ball

FEATURE VIVIANNE AYERS
PHOTOGRAPHS CHRIS WAKEFIELD PHOTOGRAPHY

SEAN'S COUNTRY LIFE

SIMPLE PLEASURES 'I absolutely love living in Bath. The combination of nature and the unified Georgian architecture never gets old. Sometimes I have to pinch myself that I live in such a beautiful place.'

PLACE TO VISIT 'We often take our dog for leisurely strolls in Castle Combe. The undulating hills and expansive landscapes offer splendid opportunities for exploration and outdoor adventures.'

PLACE TO EAT 'One of our favourites is Walcot House (walcothousebath.com), conveniently located practically at our doorstep.'

PLACE TO SHOP 'We often venture to nearby Tetbury, renowned for its antiques shops and homeware stores. It's like stepping into a treasure trove with places like Brownrigg (brownrigg-interiors.co.uk) and Lorfords (lorfordsantiques.com) beckoning us with their exquisite finds.'



COUNTRY KALEIDOSCOPE

Go bold with colour and print and create a wow house like Sean



1 HAND-PAINTED IN PORTUGAL Elouise dinner plate in Green, £28, Rebecca Udall **2 PRETTY PETAL DESIGN** Scallop lampshade, £49, M&S **3 FRILLY STRIPY TRIM** Velvet frill cushion in Ochre, £40, John Lewis & Partners **4 USE VERTICALLY OR HORIZONTALLY** Floral border stripe fabric in Midnight, £128m, Salvesen Graham **5 CHEERY CHEQUERBOARD** Lyon Di Scacchi tumbled limestone, £66sq m, Mandarin Stone **6 HANDWOVEN**

FROM RECYCLED PLASTIC BOTTLES Skala indoor/outdoor rug, £695, Oka **7 A DEEP CORAL** Rhubarb emulsion, £48 for 2.5ltr, Neptune **8 FLORAL FANCY** Double Insignia wall light, £92; Archive by Sanderson Design 16cm shades in Hyacinth Cosmo, £29 each, both Pooky **9 TIMELESS BEAUTY** New-Shaker tall cupboard in Harebell Pink, £2,795, Pilgrim House **10 ANTIQUE ART** Vintage fish print, from £25, Musee Home

FEATURE ALICE HUMPHRYS

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amongst a romp of
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Curtain twitching

If you're yet to opt into the tradition of switching your curtains between seasons, then these gorgeous drapes could convince you. With their long length and deep top turnover, they have all the drama of weighty window treatments but in light, pure cotton. Lovely... Curtain in Sade Denim; frilled cushion in Tiny Sky; check cushion in Cooper Denim, all £23.04m, Prestigious Textiles

SHOW YOUR STRIPES

Red stripes will rev up your interiors. Vertical, horizontal or chevron – anything goes, as long as they're bold



Don't play it safe when it comes to soft furnishings. Curtains and sofas follow the red line for directional country styling



TICKING AWAY

Exbury three-seater **sofa** in Ganton woven linen stripe in Red, £3,757; **cushion** in Carthorpe woven linen stripe, from £105, both Sofas & Stuff

CANDY STRIPES

Sleeper stripe made-to-measure cottage pleat **curtains** in Radish, from £550, Tori Murphy ➔

Take candy stripes into the kitchen to bring a characterful lifestyle feel to your cookspace. Or add dynamism to the dining room with go-faster chevrons



COUNTRY CALM

Stripey pendant **shade**, £115; Must Have **table lamp**, £182; Stripey string **lampshade**, £88; Sensational Stripey **candlestick**, from £38, all Birdie Fortescue

CHASING CHEVRONS

Dining room project by Studio Duggan. French bistro **chairs**, £495 each, Lizzet Frausto. For similar terracotta **flooring**, try Claybrook. Wildflower meadow **mural** by EBO Art Studio ➔





Up and down or side to side, red-striped wallpaper can widen a room or make it look taller – all while bringing a touch of jollity and *joie de vivre*



GOING FREESTYLE

Parisian mini floral **bed linen**, from £15 for a double duvet; Bobbin **table**, £22; beaded **frame**, £2; Voila **print**, £2; Blue confetti **vase**, £10; **plates**, £14 for a set of three; Spotty **candle holder**, £3; C'est la vie **cushion**, £10; Stripe ruffle knitted **throw**, £22, all George Home. Tatti Rojo Stripe **wallpaper**, £53 a roll at Wallpaperking, is similar

MAXIMUM IMPACT

Tangier **wallpaper**, £95 a roll; Lotus linen **lampshade**, £130; Candlestick **lamp base**, £265; Papaya cotton frilly **cushion**, £85; Tangier **cushion pad**, £42; The OG embroidered **tissue box cover**, £40, all Alice Palmer. Huxley **side table**, £550, Oka

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS PHOTOGRAPHS (BIRDIE FORTESCUE)
BOZ GAGOVSKI, (STUDIO DUGGAN) SARAH GRIGGS

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SUSTAINABLE CHEF

The best ways to create a characterful kitchen –
without damaging our planet

Choose a more sustainable option. Pre-loved **kitchen**, prices from £4,000, Rehome

PRE-LOVED PURCHASE

Good kitchens are built to last, but are often replaced long before they are worn out. 'A pre-loved kitchen is a great way to extend your budget, buy quality and tread lighter on the earth,' advises Helen Lord, founder of Rehome. 'Reusing a kitchen saves on average 5,000kg of carbon – that's one year of being carbon neutral for a family of four.'

When looking for a second-hand or ex-display kitchen, have the measurements of your room to hand. Buying a bigger kitchen than you need, if possible, will give you a little extra furniture to play with to create the perfect fit for your space. Remember that it may be possible to negotiate for worktops and appliances as part of the deal. ➔

Remanufactured 4 oven Modern-style AGA cooker in White, £11,500, Blake & Bull



LONG-LIFE COOKING

Cast-iron cookers are loved for their durability, radiant warmth and succulent results. However, their higher running costs have come in for criticism, so look out for models with more efficient operation, such as AGA ER7, and for Everhot cookers, which run off a standard 13amp plug and can also work with domestic solar power.

A reconditioned cooker is another option, such as those from Blake & Bull. 'It is the manufacturing of the original cooker that created the bulk of the environmental impact. We re-use the iron castings, so keeping these parts in use for decades longer,' says founder Matthew Bates. Their retooled AGA cookers are also converted to eco-electric.



Choose a classic design. Henley kitchen in solid oak, **cabinetry** from £17,000, Neptune

SUSTAINABLE TIMBER

Timber makes a good choice for kitchen furniture, and ensuring it is sourced from sustainably managed forests is key to protecting our natural environment. 'Wood cabinetry will be more resilient to wear and tear, and can be easily repaired and refreshed with a coat of paint to give the kitchen a different aesthetic when you want a change,'

says Fred Horlock, design director, Neptune. 'A good supplier should be able to reassure you about where the materials have been sourced from and their sustainability credentials.' Certification standards include FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) and PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification). ➔



Efficient appliances are key. Pure fully integrated IRF5101 fridge freezer, £1,429, Liebherr

EFFICIENT APPLIANCES

According to a 2022 survey by Liebherr, UK households are throwing away £4.3 billion per year of uneaten food. Nearly half of us aren't aware that maintaining the right humidity for storing fruit and vegetables can help them to last up to four weeks longer. 'One of the best ways to make food last longer is to invest in good refrigeration,' says Tim

Hutchinson from Liebherr UK, which has developed fridges with EasyFresh-Safe, featuring an air-tight seal.

Manufacturers such as Miele and Fisher & Paykel are also introducing innovations to help cut down power, water and detergent consumption, from eco programmes to Wi-Fi connected smart appliances.

Genuine antique English reclaimed flag flooring, from £354sq m, Lapidida



Choosing energy-efficient appliances

Look out for the most resource-efficient products to help you lower your energy bills as well as protect the environment.

Appliances are labelled to help you identify the most energy efficient: from A (high efficiency) to G (low efficiency). Some appliances, such as ovens, are rated on an old scale, from A+++ (most efficient) to G, but this is now being phased out.

The rating is based on how much energy the appliance consumes in typical use, compared with similar appliances. As appliances are generally categorised by size, a large and small fridge, for example, might have the same energy rating, but the larger model may use more electricity. So look for the best energy rating for the size of appliance you require.

Follow manufacturer's guidance on how to use your appliance most efficiently, as many offer eco-programmes and ways to maximise results while using less power.

RECLAIM, REUSE

'Reclaimed stone is the ultimate sustainable floor,' says Jason Cherrington, director, Lapidida. 'Processing it into modern shapes, patterns and a consistent thickness gives the surface a second life, significantly lowering the carbon footprint, and bringing style to the home without using new resources that cause further environmental damage.'

Maitland & Poate offers rescued Spanish encaustic tiles, as does Bert & May, which also sells reclaimed terracotta. Another option is reclaimed wood – try suppliers such as Reclaimed Flooring Co, Lawsons Yard and Lassco. Sizes, colours and thicknesses may vary, so these materials are for those who want character, rather than consistency.

WHITE LIGHT

In all its subtly varying tints and tones, white brings a sense of spaciousness to rooms. Stylist and interiors expert Sara Bird highlights how to use it successfully in your country home

Despite it officially being a 'non-colour', white is one of the most symbolic shades. In different cultures, it can signify innocence and perfection; it may be used in spiritual ceremonies; and it can represent welcoming a new life or denote the passing to a different one.

White pigments are found naturally as clay and chalk. Some of the first-known uses for these were in prehistoric paintings and sculpted imagery on hills – think of the horses and figures bestriding British uplands. White and bleached fabrics were used to dress the wealthy and worthy, and toxic face paints were a sign of nobility in Elizabethan times.

Shades of white are one of our most explored paint palettes in our homes. With links to nature – think of hues reminiscent of frost, blossom, doves and cresting waves – white is a country décor staple, offering atmospheric and seasonal shades.

WAYS TO USE WHITE

Textural edge Encourage white shades to stand out with a blend of rough and smooth surfaces. Adding different layers brings visual interest and ensures white never becomes boring. Use it to highlight materials, such as painted brick or woodwork and plaster. For décor, incorporate textiles, such as snuggly bouclé and tufted trims, and pitted or punched detail on homewares and accessories.

Finish first Powdery, chalky matt surfaces have long been a country staple, but glossier touches are

coming through, from sleek satins and silks to plush velvet fabrics, polished recycled materials to painted sheens. Glossy finishes are durable, so are certainly practical in rural settings, and they also offer light-enhancing qualities.

Natural neutrals The organic origins of white – from chalk to wool fleeces – create an enormous pale palette to be explored. This can be smartened up, pared down or warmed and cooled as the seasons change. Used in combinations of paint in subtle white shades, and a mix of rugs or carpets and fabrics, the neutral palette brings luminous, homely, calm or fresh variations.

Accent appeal White is the perfect backdrop to a pop of colour. Inviting an unexpected hue into a scheme allows your décor to entertain with a moment of spirit, humour, oomph or drama. In an all-white scheme, accent the mundane, such as step risers, windowsills, shelf edges and all manner of furniture legs, knobs, backs and trims, with a surprising contrasting shade to bring a quirky note to country interiors.

Country styles White has been the leading shade of many favourite country decorating looks, including Scandi cabins, the chipped finish of shabby chic and the relaxed vibe in coastal spaces. New to interiors is the Japandi-boho fusion. Create this modern country aesthetic with tonal white shades alongside natural wood finishes and woven grass materials. It is suited to be used in most rooms but →

1 EASY LIVING

Enticing warm whites and creams suit country-style rooms, while additional pops of peach make for a warming and welcoming setting. Use this combination in a family room to ensure the space has relaxed overtones. **Brioche sofa** in Egg Box clever vintage linen, £3,295, Loaf

2 BLUR THE BOUNDARIES

In a room with a collection of mixed furniture, use white to create a harmonising blank canvas. A coat of white paint across different pieces and surfaces creates a cohesive look to be added to at later date. **Rug**, André Fu at Tai Ping

3 CREME DE LA CREME

Hinting at purity and cleanliness, white is an obvious choice for a kitchen, but stop it looking clinical in a country setting with a tonal array of creamy colours. Combine milk, almond and mushroom shades on surfaces, pottery, crockery and linens to ensure a warm and soft feel. **Subway tiles** in Cream, from £16 each; **Heirloom Task light**, from £400; **Ionian tap** in Aged Brass, from £560, all deVOL

4 CHEF'S WHITES

Create a calm cooking environment with glossy white surfaces and cool blue accent details in lighting and woodwork. Exposed surfaces, such as brickwork, introduce contrasting texture and warmth to the spotless finish. **Suffolk kitchen**, from £14,000, Neptune





is particularly soothing in a bedroom or bathroom environment.

Practical magic Make white user-friendly in a country home by managing everyday wear and tear. Choose glossy textures to create wipeable surfaces. Dress sofas in loose covers to whip off and wash. When serving dinner on pristine tablecloths, use runners under food platters and glassware and remove after mealtimes. For busy areas, such as hallways and staircases, go for hardwearing paints and finishes to avoid scrapes and scratches.

Classic combinations Country decorating duos often pair white with a complementary colour – coastal blue and white, perhaps, or French and Gustavian schemes see white with red and black. A new direction in country homes décor contrasts gentler and warmer shades, such as peaches and cream or caramel and milky-white. Use these latest colour

combinations to drift with the seasons, working them throughout the home for a calming environment.

Dreamy décor The pure, cleansed feel of white means it's frequently used in spas and medical centres. This association lends itself easily to bathroom, bedroom and kitchen schemes. But to avoid it becoming soulless and sterile, include plenty of textural surfaces and finishes. Try pearly-white tiles, frosted glazing, woven or self-patterned fabrics and embossed or grasscloth wallpapers.

Positive thinking White has its colour feet in both progressive and negative mindsets. Relaxing or an exciting blank canvas in one, and a cold feeling of isolation in another. Bringing positive elements into a room can be helpful, supporting a mindful balance. Use light-reflecting surfaces and organic materials, and include personal objects, fresh flowers and foraged finds.

5 SUBTLE DETAIL

White-on-white self-patterns, as seen in these stacked tiles and diaphanous drapes, bring delicate definition to a pale room. **Blind** in Aurea in Meadow, £75m; **curtain** in Audley in Birch, £95m; **stool** in Kempton in Sundown, £35m, all Villa Nova

6 BREEZY SHADES

A subtle nod to coastal style, the pale-blue hue combined here with white creates a soothing scheme perfect for sleep spaces. Oxford linen **pillowcase**, £26; king-size linen **duvet cover**, £199, both Secret Linen Store

7 MONOCHROME MAGIC

Black with white creates a timeless scheme. Accenting just a couple of features in a darker shade can transform a space and bring a designer look. **Walls** in Capuchin; **window frame** in Charbone, both Architects' Eggshell, £84 for 2.5ltr, Paint & Paper Library

ROOM ORIENTATION

White shades can make for light, lofty rooms but can feel unwelcoming if used unwisely.

North-facing rooms To steer clear of gloomy or chilly schemes, avoid white colours with traces of blue. Warmer whites with yellow bases, such as parchment, ivory or linen, make a room feel inviting even in the depths of winter.

South-facing rooms Interiors with direct southerly sun, especially

when it is lower in the sky, will glow and reflect the light dramatically. Choose a white hue with watery-azure undertones – snow, frost and porcelain – to cool and complement.

West and east-facing rooms These spaces offer the chance to embrace most off-white shades as the sun shifts throughout the day. Mint, lavender, rose and peach whites look particularly pretty during daylight hours and as the season shifts.

FIVE FOUNDATIONS OF

OUTDOOR KITCHENS

Cook up a storm in the garden with a fully functional cooking space that has everything, including the kitchen sink

I

PERFECT POSITION

The interior trend for freestanding kitchens has grown to incorporate al fresco cooking areas too. Built to be appreciated from all angles, a freestanding kitchen gives you total freedom of location, helping it to become an integrated part of the garden rather than being an awkward, functional add-on. The secret is finding the right position. 'For this outdoor kitchen, we opted for a spot on the edge of a patio as it meant we were able to have mains water and drainage at the base of the sink cabinet and the pipes could be disguised with a well-positioned shrub,' explains Matt Podesta, co-founder and creative director at Huckleberry. ➔





Think carefully about the position of your kitchen. **Outdoor kitchen**, £10,235, Huckleberry

Add a Med-style hue to your garden. **Wall** painted in Tuscan Red intelligent masonry paint, £83 for 5ltr, Little Greene



2

TASTE OF THE MED

A good outdoor kitchen should be an oasis where you can enjoy meals with family and friends. One way to achieve this is with colour. 'Living in the northern hemisphere, we can't always rely on flowers or greenery to create colour in the garden. By creating an exterior accent wall, or by painting fences or garden

furniture, you can bring your outdoor space to life all year round,' says Ruth Mottershead, creative director at Little Greene. Drawing inspiration from warmer Mediterranean climes, Little Greene's Tuscan Red evokes the sense of summer and looks wonderful combined with wooden furniture and exposed brick.

3

POWERING UP

If you love entertaining, then an outdoor kitchen should be as functional as your kitchen indoors – this will prevent you from being split between the two spaces, meaning you can spend more time with your guests. ‘An outdoor kitchen should have a strong terrace to stand on and you will need an electrician to connect outdoor

wiring and sockets for lights and a fridge. If you want mains gas rather than refillable bottles for your stove or barbecue, a gas engineer can install this,’ says Caroline Burvill of outdoor kitchen specialists Gaze Burvill. ‘It is so important to plan these services before the terrace is done, so everything can be kept discreetly out of sight.’ ➔



Plan your set up carefully. Bespoke outdoor kitchens, from £70,000, Gaze Burvill

Pick a welcoming shade. **Wall** painted in Verdant Royal Exterior, £19.20 for 1ltr, Protek



4

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

Don't let having a small garden quash your outdoor kitchen dreams. Choosing a fully functional yet compact workspace will provide a prep, cooking and serving area, plus storage for outdoor dining essentials, without commandeering an entire wall or patio. Once the cooking is done, you can fold away the sides

to leave a small unit. This gives you more space to accommodate a larger seating area and capitalise on your entertaining space. Paint walls a space-enhancing green shade and add decorative floor tiles to complete your outdoor kitchen – adding a few shelves to the walls will give you extra storage space too.

FEATURE HOLLY REANEY

5

KEEPING COOL

Cooking is only one element of al fresco dining. Equally important is being able to keep food and drinks cold. Some outdoor kitchens feature electric fridges, although these can be costly and require professional installation. A more affordable alternative is an ice trough or bucket – providing the perfect spot for serving drinks.

Opt for a container with a reflective interior or line it with tin foil – this will help to reflect heat. Fill the container with blocks of ice or ice cubes – ice packs work well – then add your drinks and fill up the remaining space with ice cubes. Top up with ice, when needed, to keep the drinks cool throughout the day.



St Mawes teak bar table with sunken zinc ice bucket, £850, Garden Trading

Room with a view

Building a garden room can turn your work or gym commute into a stroll across the lawn. Here's what to consider before you head outside



FEATURE TAMARA KELLY, NATASHA BRINSMEAD
PHOTOGRAPH OAK DESIGN COMPANY

Less intrusive, faster to build and generally far more affordable than an extension, a garden room can be a great solution for working from home, hobbies, or extra living space. By definition a glazed structure with a fully tiled roof, a garden room can either be freestanding or attached to an existing building. Which you choose will depend on the space you have available, your budget and the purpose of your new room.

Q What factors will affect the construction of a new garden room?

A Most garden room designs, with sliding glass doors or a deck, for example, will need to be built on site by a specialist. Once the concrete base or piles are in, installation can take from one day to two weeks. To make things quicker or more flexible, look for designs that don't require foundations – some companies use ground screws instead.

Consider the materials used in its construction – are they sustainable and recyclable? And what is the warranty period being offered? Longer warranty terms indicate a quality build and materials, meaning your garden room will stand the test of time. It's also best to fit locks on doors and choose toughened glass to make your garden room secure.

Avoid positioning the garden room near growing trees, and ensure there's access for maintenance. You

will also need to think about access for delivery, although panels could be carried through the house.

Q Do I need planning permission to install a garden room?

A If your building is away from the house, takes up less than 50 per cent of the garden and is smaller than 15sq m, or in some cases 30sq m, you're unlikely to need planning permission or Building Regulations Approval. However, there are exceptions – such as if you intend to use the room for sleeping in – so check online at planningportal.gov.uk, and consult your local council's planning department before you commit.

Permission may be denied if you live in a conservation area, if the location is within the curtilage of a listed building, or if your property is in a national park or area of outstanding natural beauty. The use of any garden building is also restricted to purposes 'incidental to the enjoyment of a dwelling house' – essentially, for household use only.

Q Can I use a garden room all year round?

A To maximise the potential of your garden build, fit insulation and double-glazed windows so you can use it through the colder months. An electrician can run a cable from your house to the room to power lights and heating. In some cases, downlighters, sockets and wiring may be pre-installed in the panel

walls. You could also install a woodburner for a cosy cabin vibe.

Q What size should my garden room be?

A If you are considering using your garden room as a home gym, you should consider head height. Remember that permitted development allows for 2.5m in height if the garden room is on a boundary, but that rises to 4m at the peak of a roof if the unit is 2m or more from any boundary.

For a garden games room, you'll need plenty of space to play table games – 247x153cm for a table tennis table, for example. Make this the main factor when planning the layout and size. Fancy making yours a music room? Look for a specialist company that offers soundproofing.

Q How much will it cost to buy and install a garden room?

A A garden room, fully installed, with heating, electrics and a water supply and drainage, is going to cost far more than a simple timber structure that you can build yourself.

For example, a basic garden room from Project Timber, made from pressure treated tongue and groove boards, an OSB floor and roof, and a mineral felt roof covering, could cost £700, uninstalled. But you will need to organise foundations, a base, rainwater goods, installation, construction and any other extras. There will be no electrics, insulation, heating or lights included in the price – an important consideration if you want to use it as a garden office. An insulated garden building would cost from around £3,600.

In contrast, a fully installed turnkey 2x2m design from Green Retreats, complete with foundations, French doors, a window, choice of flooring, redwood cladding, insulation, plug sockets, heating and lighting, will start at around £20,000.

Collect quotes and compare these with the costs of an extension, which range from £1,500-£2,500 per m².

Q Does having a garden room add value to a property?

A Leading property experts estimate that building a garden room can add one and a half times its value to a home – depending on the quality of the build and costs of the installation. 'A high-quality garden room can boost the value of your home by five to 15 per cent,' explains Luke Jackson at Michael Graham estate agents.

Life on the edge

Sharpen the borders of your lawn, and mark where the grass ends and a path or border begins, with well defined edging



Like the piping on a cushion or coving on a wall, a crisply delineated lawn border can provide the perfect finishing touch to your garden landscape. Without it, the borders of your grass are blurry and undefined. With a neatly defined edge, you maintain a picture-perfect appearance with minimal effort. Edging your lawn will help to prevent grass from spreading into the border, makes lawn maintenance easier and provides a decorative touch to your outdoor space.

‘Garden edging is not only a stylish way to bring extra layers of colour and texture to your outdoor space, but it also adds a sense of shape

TOE THE LINE

Left Poured concrete edging creates a sleek division between the lawn and adjacent pathway

Right Low box hedging gently defines the border between the grass and the patio area

and keeps everything neat and tidy,’ explains Lee Dunderdale, product manager at Bradstone.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT STYLE

‘Garden edging is perfect for lining flower borders or defining front-garden boundaries and driveways. It can also be used to create retaining walls and raised beds,’ says Jenny Davis, marketing manager at Forest Garden.

Deciding on the best edging for your garden will primarily depend on its design. Opting for solid lawn edging will remove the need for the laborious practice of re-cutting your lawn edges every few months. Cottage gardens will benefit

Evergreen or lavender hedging is a good choice for edging lawns in a cottage garden, or opt for riven stone, timber or decorative solid borders

from a more organic look – riven stone, timber or decorative borders (also known as mini-fencing) work well. A sleeker edging choice will be a better fit for a contemporary-style garden – perhaps minimalist metal fencing or concrete borders.

For a softer approach to lawn edging, planting offers a decorative way to frame your lawn. Opt for low-level evergreen hedges, such as box or privet, for traditional style that will look smart all year round. However, hedges will need more maintenance in terms of pruning and weeding.

CONSIDERING SAFETY

When installing edging, think about practicality as well as how it looks. ‘If you want to edge between a lawn and patio, or between a lawn and path, remember raised edging in the middle of your garden could cause a trip hazard or cut off these spaces from the rest of the garden,’ says Lee. In these spaces, flat edging is the best option – ensure that it is level with the patio or path and the lawn.

GARDENING FOR WILDLIFE

Hedging is one of the most popular lawn edges, bringing a more natural appearance than metal or concrete. Hedges are also a welcome addition for wildlife, protecting birds as they forage, providing habitat for insects and pollinators, and offering plenty of food for small herbivores.

If you’re looking for a more decorative finish, lavender is perfect, bringing beautiful blooms and a calming fragrance. When used as lawn edging, lavender also disguises rough edges and provides pollen and nectar for bees and butterflies. Prices for planted edging will depend on the size and variety of the plant – if you are willing to put in small plants and let them grow to size, it can be an affordable option.

HARD BORDERS

For a more solid choice, there are several options. Elevated edging, such as wood, stone,

flexible rubber, or steel designs, is very easy to install – simply push the sharpened points or nails into the edge of the lawn using a rubber mallet. ‘Ready-made garden edging products can transform borders in no time. And there are plenty of options to suit different styles, from mini sleepers and dome-topped edging to landscaping sleepers and log rolls,’ says Jenny Davis. For a classic country look, woven hurdles – usually made from willow or hazel – provide a natural choice that looks like it has grown with the landscape and has been there for years.

A highly durable alternative is sunken concrete. Easy to install, this long-lasting and low-maintenance material can be laid curved or straight. If you’re handy, you can create poured concrete edging yourself. Start by mapping out the edging with rope, then dig a channel – about 20cm wide and between 10-15cm deep is ideal. Then compact the soil, also known as tamping, to create a base. Mix and pour the concrete into the channel, smoothing to create a sleek finish. Apply an acrylic concrete sealer to ensure its durability.

Solid concrete slabs are also available, but they lack the same flexibility in design as poured concrete.

COSTING UP

Prices vary depending on the style of edging you choose. Plastic edging is the cheapest option – averaging a couple of pounds a metre – however, you will have to compromise on aesthetics, longevity and sustainability. The most affordable yet decorative options are rolls of timber edging or mini-fencing that cost between £5 and £10 a metre and can be found at garden centres.

According to Checkatrade and quantity surveyors B3 Cost Consulting, concrete edging is priced from £20 a metre for pre-formed concrete or £50 a metre for poured concrete. The higher prices reflect the longevity of these materials, as they won’t rot or degrade over time.

Brick has a similar price point, though there are differences between laying patterns – laying end to end requires fewer bricks than those laid side by side. Expect prices to start around £30 a metre. Costs will increase if you hire a professional as you will also have to pay for their labour and skill.

SOURCEBOOK

BRADSTONE Stone edging in a host of colours, bradstone.com

FOREST GARDEN Sleepers, log roll and border edging, forestgarden.co.uk

JEWSON Wide variety of different edging options, jewson.co.uk



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Called to the bar

How to solve the inside-outside shuffle of carrying drinks to and from the garden? Put down the tray and open a window, allowing you to be host and bartender from inside your kitchen. It's the perfect summertime solution for easy country living. Cladded wall in Celestial Blue; shutters and frame in Loft White, both intelligent exterior eggshell, £86 for 2.5ltr, Little Greene



Our friend, Rachel

Gardener, writer and TV presenter Rachel de Thame invites us into her Cotswold home and garden, and shares why the creation of her new book on pollinator-friendly plants was a family affair

I live in an old house in the Cotswolds, and I'm passionate about helping it be the property it's supposed to be. The décor is in keeping with the period of the house without it looking too much like a museum. It's quite an eclectic mix of things, and it's a very personal space as well. I love antiques and I love art, and I have a magpie instinct for snapping up things that I spot. I find lots of vases for 20p in charity shops! It's the same in the garden – I see a plant, fall in love with it, and can't resist taking it home.

Our garden looks onto the neighbouring fields, which means I have this incredible borrowed view. It looks like the garden just goes on and on – although, thankfully, I don't have to take care of all of it! Part of the garden is walled, which we restored gradually, and filled with raised beds. I grow fruit and veg but also a lot of cut flowers. In the run-up to writing my new book, I was experimenting with growing blooms I could cut for the house and enjoy in the garden, and that would also attract pollinators and other beneficial insects. That means growing things that are in flower for a

long period across the year (because a lot of pollinators are surprisingly active through every season), but also flowers of various shapes and sizes to suit different insects.

Rather delightfully, the more I've focused on planting for pollinators, the more beautiful and beneficial my garden has become. It literally hums with activity. If you think of all the ribbons of green gardens that flow behind our houses, and our temperate climate that allows us to grow a wide range of plants, then I feel we can be a part of a communal space we share with pollinators, all enjoying our gardens together.

I wanted the book to be personal, so I've included plants I have experienced growing myself. It was hard to whittle it down: my longlist of about 250 shrunk to 80. I'd go to bed, thinking I'd finished, then wake up the next morning and say, 'No I can't possibly leave out that particular plant'. Researching the book was an absolute joy. I'm a bit nerdy and it was fun to explore the entomological side as well as the horticulture. These creatures are extraordinary.

The book is illustrated by my daughter →

Left Rachel in her garden: 'Watching bees bumping into one another as they zip from flower to flower is one of life's joys'

‘It was wonderful to retrain as a gardener after going to ballet school – when you go back to study as an adult, it’s because you really want to, not because you have to’

Lauren Lusk, who is a botanical artist. It’s that thing of the apple not falling far from the tree: she has always been influenced by nature, so it was lovely to find a project that we wanted to do together. It was enormously challenging for her because she already had three young children and was pregnant while producing this book. I’m just very grateful she agreed to do it.

My career didn’t start with gardening, but gardening was there from the very beginning. My parents were keen gardeners, and it quickly became my happy place. I trained at the Royal Ballet School for seven years, but life took me in other directions. All the way through, I would have a gardening book or magazine with me and, in my free time, I would be visiting gardens. I retrained at the English Gardening School for two years and supplemented that learning with lectures at Kew, Capel Manor and Wisley. It was wonderful – when you go back to study as an adult, it’s because you really want to and not because you have to.

Being a mum and a grandma keeps me very busy. My youngest is still at school doing her A levels, so there’s a lot going on. I find I can no longer relax in a garden; it’s impossible. My favourite thing is to potter around, deadheading – that’s my idea of having a good time! My husband can just sit – or lie down – in the garden. But I always spot something that needs doing or that could be improved. That’s the fun of it. **Rachel’s book, *A Flower Garden for Pollinators* (£25, Greenfinch), is out now.**

Right In the walled garden, Rachel’s aim is to attract pollinators while pleasing the eye with nuanced plant palettes

FEATURE HEATHER MARSHALL
PHOTOGRAPHS JONATHAN BUCKLEY



A woman with long brown hair, wearing a light blue dress, stands in a garden. She is holding a small potted plant with purple flowers. The garden is filled with yellow daisies in the foreground and purple flowers in the background. A stone wall is visible behind her, and a large green bush is on the left side of the image.

Rachel's tips for a pollinator- friendly garden

- Choose plants with a variety of flower shapes.
- Plant for each season.
- Be generous and plant the same thing in volume.
- Layer plants to ensure best use of space and maximum benefit for pollinators, by including trees, shrubs, bulbs, perennials and wildflowers.
- Add plants that flower in the evening, producing scent to entice night-flying moths.
- Plant for the entire life cycle, from egg, to caterpillar, to butterfly. Grow foliage plants for pollinators to lay their eggs on and to provide food for larvae.
- Put up bee boxes.
- Accept that leaf damage

caused by caterpillars is a necessary part of the process, and congratulate yourself that butterflies and moths are choosing to lay their eggs in your garden.

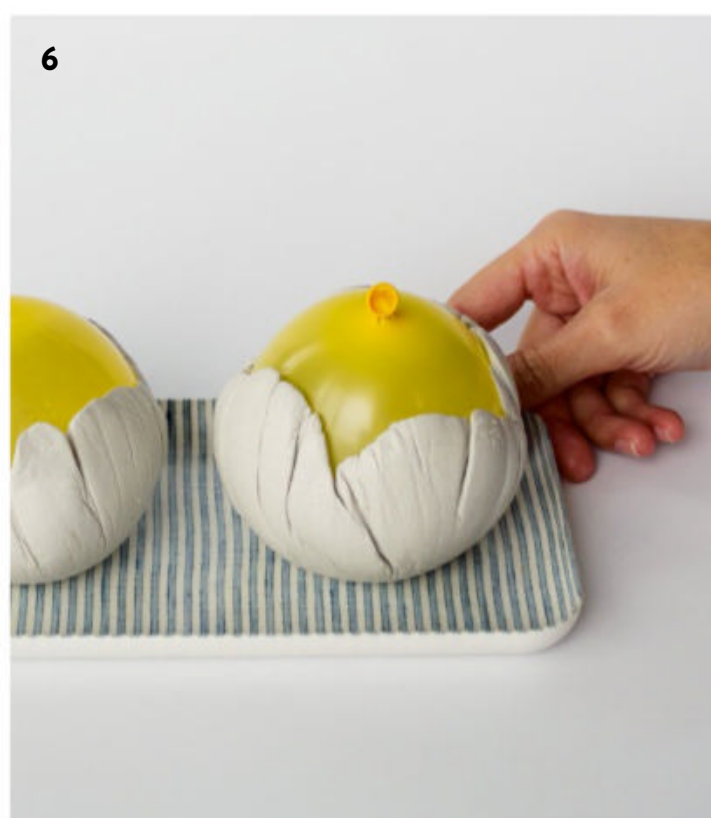
- Include water. Bees and wasps will drink from a water source and mud can be used to plug the entrance to bee egg-laying chambers.
- Create a wildlife pond.
- Leave parts of the lawn unmown to encourage wildflowers.
- Replace lawns and hard landscaping with flowering plants.
- Don't tidy up at the end of autumn.
- Leave messy areas and embrace the benefits of leaving things untouched.
- Garden organically and never spray anything with pesticides, herbicides or other chemicals.

Weekend makes

Discover the joy of creating beautiful pieces for your home, with these straightforward projects for a rope caddy, a cushion cover and the cutest clay bowl

CLAY VESSELS

These clever clay catch-all vessels are pretty enough to have on a counter, small enough to fit inside a dresser drawer and durable enough to survive a toddler. They also glow beautifully with the addition of a small tea light.



SUPPLIES AND TOOLS

DAS air-hardening modelling clay

Rolling pin or wooden dowel (optional)

Biodegradable latex water balloons

Plastic wrap or film (a single sheet can be used multiple times)

1 Soften a large handful of DAS clay, working it between two hands and forming into a ball.

2 Flatten the clay ball using the palm of your hands to form a disc. Continue to press the clay outwards until the disc is 15-18cm in diameter. You can

use a rolling pin if desired, but do not roll it out too thin.

3 Blow up a water balloon but not to its maximum capacity; leave at least one-quarter empty.

4 Place the clay disc in the centre of a square of plastic wrap big enough to cover the balloon completely. Place the balloon in the centre of the clay with the knot side of the balloon facing up.

5 Bring the sides of the plastic wrap up over the balloon and twist the plastic at the end over the balloon. Use your fingers to press the clay

upward toward the tied end of the balloon, working around the balloon evenly.

6 Once you are happy with the size of the vessel, gently remove the plastic wrap and place the clay-wrapped balloon somewhere safe to dry. Depending on the sun exposure and the thickness of the clay, it can take a few days to become completely dry. The balloon will naturally deflate over time, so you can gently remove it when the clay becomes solid. Once the balloon is removed, turn your vessel upside-down to let the bottom dry out completely before using. →



ENVELOPE CUSHION COVERS

The simplest way to cover a cushion is with an envelope-style case. These cases don't require anything in the way of special skill – no need for zips or buttons or even, truly, a tape measure. Use your cushion insert as a guide and eyeball the rest.

SUPPLIES AND TOOLS

Medium-weight fabric (roughly two and a half times longer and 10cm wider than the cushion you are covering)

Sewing machine, thread and pins

Cushion

1 Fold over and stitch the two short sides of the fabric to make a 6mm simple hem.

2 With the right side of the fabric facing up, place the cushion in the centre of the hemmed fabric. Fold one hemmed edge over the cushion and bring the opposite edge over to meet it. The ends should overlap by roughly 13cm in the centre.

3 Slide the cushion out from the bottom opening and pin the unhemmed sides in place.

4 With a sewing machine, sew the two unhemmed sides, leaving a 2.5cm seam allowance.

5 Trim the seam allowance to 1.3cm and turn your work right side out through the envelope seam.

6 Gently poke out the four corners and insert the cushion through the open centre flap. ➔





The best way to gauge the exact fabric dimensions needed is to cover the cushion form with fabric and mark off where you need to trim. Make sure you leave 2.5cm or so on the right and left sides, and at least 15cm of overlap in the centre of your cushion

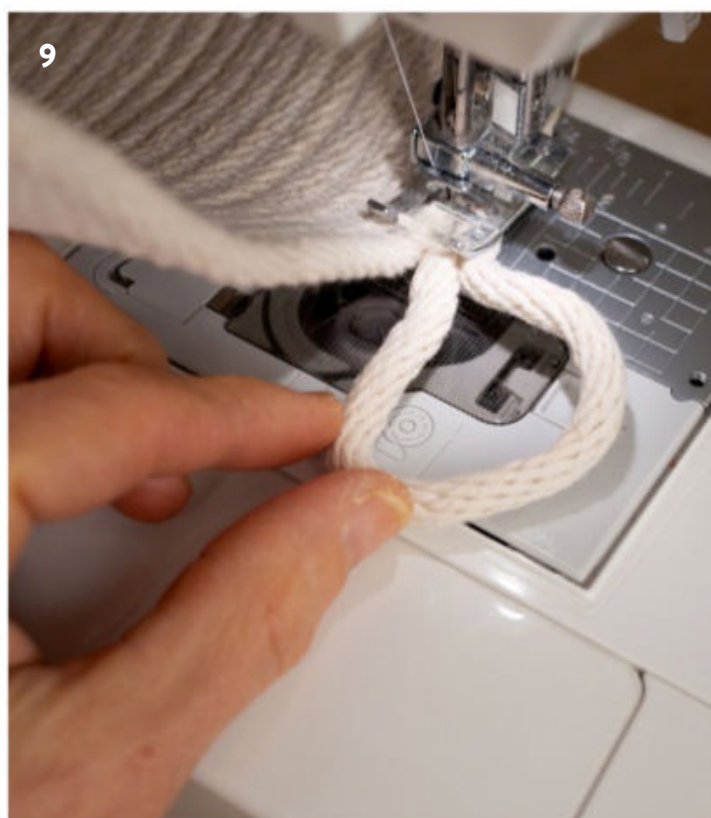
ROPE BOWLS

This project boils down to lots of thread and one repetitive, hypnotic sewing machine function. Make sure you sew with the needle connecting one rope to the other, side to side, then just coast along. For an estimate, 30.5m of rope will make two small bowls.

Thread Before you begin, make sure you are using the same thread in both the upper bobbin and the bobbin inside the compartment that lies under the presser foot of your machine. A durable thread such as an all-purpose polyester works best.

Needle Using a heavy-duty needle is a great choice when sewing thick material like rope.

Machine settings The stitch selection dial on your machine should be set on the zigzag function with the width set to 4-5mm wide. The stitch length should be 3.5-4mm, and the tension should be set between 4 and 5.



SUPPLIES AND TOOLS

Cotton clothesline

Sewing machine and thread

Scissors

TO FORM THE BASE

1 Begin by coiling the tail end of your rope into a disk, 5cm in diameter.

2 Keeping the coils together, place the centre of the coil under the presser foot of your sewing machine.

3 Using a zigzag stitch, sew straight across the coil. Without adjusting the

foot, reverse and sew to the opposite end. Repeat to secure those stitches.

4 Lift up the foot and rotate the coil so you are sewing another straight line across the first one, making an X. Repeat step 3 to secure. (This first part will often appear a bit messy, but it won't be so noticeable once the bowl is finished.)

TO GROW THE BASE

5 Once the centre of the base is stable, begin sewing in the round to expand it, linking one side of each rope into a coil as you go. The size of your base depends on what shape you want your bowl to take and is entirely up to you.

6 Position your base under the needle so that the rope that's secured in a coil is to the left of the needle and the loose rope is to the right. Lower the presser foot to secure and begin to slowly sew a zigzag stitch. The needle should go down into the left rope, up and down again into the right rope, back and forth, to connect the loose rope to the

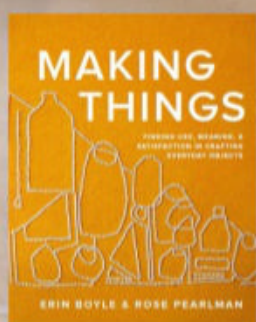
bowl. Continue carefully following this line as you sew and the coil grows.

TO SHAPE THE SIDES

7 Angle the circle upward and sew so the sides of the bowl begin to form.

8 Continue in this way until you are happy with the height of the sides. If you continue to sew at an angle, the sides of the bowl will naturally widen with every revolution. If you want to build the sides up straighter, hold the base of the bowl at a more vertical angle, with the top edge reaching over the machine's top. Continue to coil in this manner.

9 Once your bowl reaches your desired size, cut a 1cm end from the working rope and tuck the cut end in a loop to form a handle. Continue to sew, stitching the cut end together with the lower and the top cord. Sew forwards and back a few times to make sure the frayed end of the rope is completely covered in stitches and the handle is secure.



Making Things
by Erin Boyle and
Rose Pearlman
(£25, Hardie Grant)





‘It’s magical when the flower springs to life’

Ling Warlow, paper botanist



There's a touch of Wonderland to Ling Warlow's studio. Shelves are packed with ribbons and crepe, while a joyful abundance of paper flowers bursts forth all around. One enormous foxglove spray reaches almost to the ceiling, tiny buds at the top giving way to a cascade of trumpets in delicate pink, while blowsy Japanese anemones bob alongside. 'I love to see the reaction of anyone who comes in here,' says Ling. 'They always go quiet for a minute, gathering it all in.'

The studio occupies one ground-floor room of a large red-brick Victorian terraced house, now divided into seven workspaces for various artists. Ling lives not far away, with both home and studio located in the small seaside town of Hoylake, where the river Dee meets the Irish Sea, on the Wirral, Merseyside. She need only look left out of her front door to see the sea.

Ling was born to a Danish mother and English father, and named for the heather that covers the countryside during August – in Denmark it's also called 'lyng'. She grew up in Yorkshire, where her mother was a ceramics

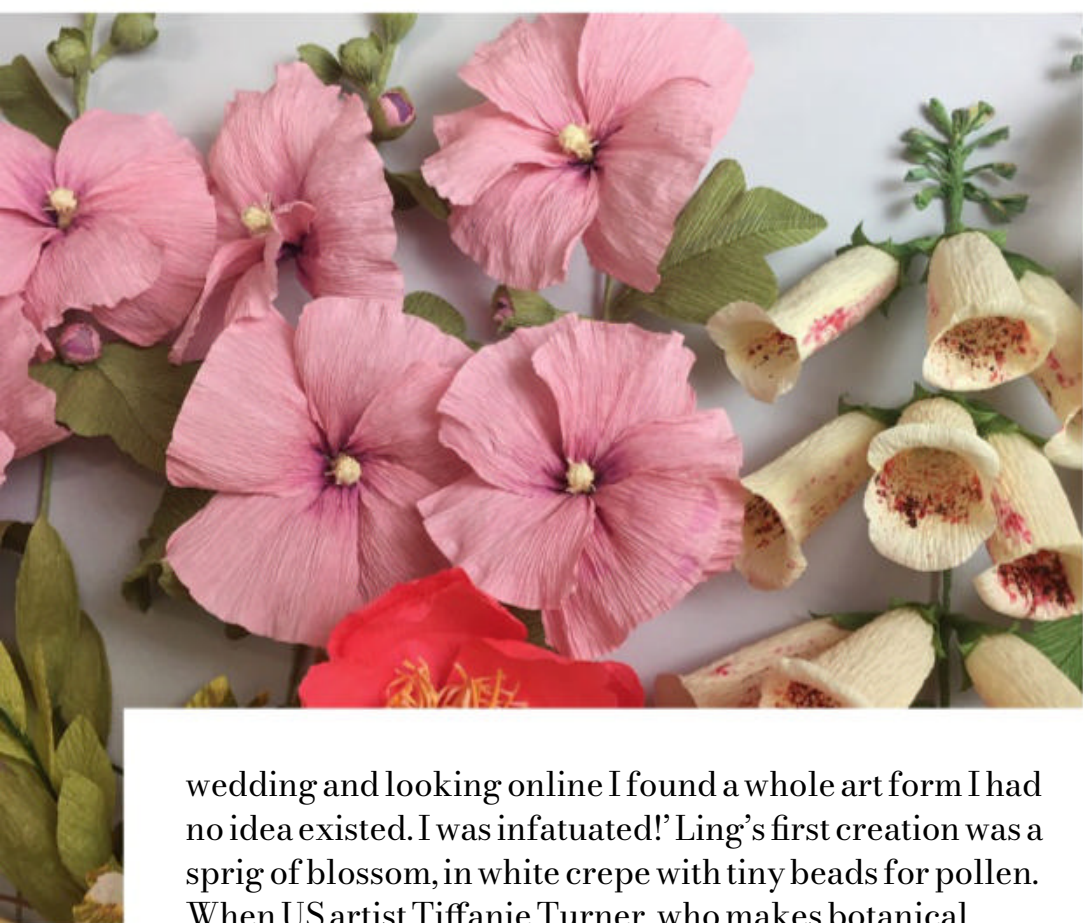
artist and her father a painter and art teacher. The family had a vegetable patch and no TV. 'I learnt knitting, crocheting, weaving, macrame... all sorts. On walks with my dad, we'd take a box of watercolours along to paint. I spent a lot of time looking at wildflowers, learning their names.'

Yet it took many years to find her true path. Ling studied English and philosophy, before working her way up from call centres to management consultancy. She began making hand-finished greetings cards, selling to companies. Later, she plucked up courage to ask a friend if she could produce the invitations for her wedding. Within a couple of years, she was running a full-time wedding stationery business, Dragonfly Couture Stationery.

Not until some years later did Ling chance upon the art of paper botany. 'A client requested giant flowers for her →

Left Ling's commissions include crepe paper flower bouquets for weddings, as well as giant blooms to decorate party venues

Above Her extraordinarily detailed constructions are made from paper, wire and glue, and coloured with natural dyes



wedding and looking online I found a whole art form I had no idea existed. I was infatuated!’ Ling’s first creation was a sprig of blossom, in white crepe with tiny beads for pollen. When US artist Tiffanie Turner, who makes botanical sculptures, held a workshop in Edinburgh, Ling carved out time to attend – just. ‘My head was full of ideas, but wedding deadlines are unforgiving. I was a busy mum to twin girls – AKA taxi driver. I had found my real passion, but making it happen at this point felt impossible.’

Then 2020 arrived and Ling’s entire wedding business was cancelled. It could have been a calamity, as for so many others, but for her, it was a gift. ‘Immersed myself in flower making. We went on family walks and I saw wildflowers everywhere, transporting me back to childhood but also bringing home how my children – and most people – no longer had knowledge of wild plants and their names.’

The flowers are wrought of wood, wire and crepe paper. ‘It’s an incredible material, at once strong and delicate. It evokes the grace of a flower, yet can withstand the years – there are some in existence in temples that are thousands

of years old. My bouquets will fade, but unlike real flowers that desiccate, the forms remain, and the flowers tend to tone together. There is beauty as they age.’

Ling describes a kind of magic in the process. ‘That moment you bend the edges to form a floret, thinking, “This is never going to work”, and suddenly it springs to life.’ The dyes are all-natural, made from locally foraged plants and kitchen scraps – nettles for green; madder root for reds and pinks; onion skins and red cabbage for a surprising range of yellows, greens, pinks and lilac. In the studio, saucepans simmer away, creating colours.

The work features in photo shoots as botanical props. One artist commissioned a top hat covered in medicinal plants – nettles, willow, foxgloves, wild roses – as well as a quiver and bow whose arrows were topped with flowers. But community arts occupies the majority of Ling’s time, such as her Wildflower Project, creating botanically accurate depictions of coltsfoot, bindweed and bay willow herb, funded by the Arts Council to encourage people to look closer at nature and exhibited in her studio. She made

Gathering rosebuds

Old art forms with new twists,
for flourishing businesses...

MELISSA RICHARDSON & AMY FIELDING, PRESSED FLOWER DESIGNERS

Inspired by the wildflowers of her Sussex childhood, Melissa Richardson founded floristry business JamJar Flowers in 2009, with Amy Fielding joining later. When fashion house Mulberry commissioned them to make event invites with pressed flowers on, the pair realised this old-fashioned art form could be due an update. They founded JamJar Edit, for pressed flower home décor. Their newest venture is an online workshop, teaching responsible foraging, how to make your own press, and how to mount works. See Learn the Art of Flower Pressing from Create Academy, £97 for lifetime access. jamjaredit.co.uk

ALISON BAILEY SMITH, JEWELLER AND SCULPTOR

While studying jewellery at Edinburgh College of Art, Alison was inspired to work with recycled materials. The wire from old TV sets and metal from tomato purée tubes are reinvented as elegant jewellery. Today, Alison's garden in Oxtun, Birkenhead, has become a great influence, with pieces including a patchwork, flower-topped hedgerow brooch and discarded artificial rosebuds wound round with copper wire and synthetic fabric.

abscraft.com, Instagram
[@alisonbaileysmith](https://www.instagram.com/alisonbaileysmith)

LOUISE CONDON, CERAMIC BOTANIST

For 22 years, Louise was an art and design teacher in further education, but she never stopped working with the medium of clay that she fell in love with during her studies, creating vases and selling them at flower shows including the RHS. She took the vases full-time in 2021, working from a garden studio in Chester, close to the North Wales border. In summer, she uses foraged wildflowers; in winter, preserved stems are pressed into the raw stoneware, which yields a textured, rustic finish.

louisecondondesigns.co.uk, Instagram
[@ceramic_botanist](https://www.instagram.com/ceramic_botanist)

‘The dyes for the flowers are made from
foraged plants and kitchen scraps
– nettles for green, onion skins for pink’

flowers for the Hillsborough Memorial. And she worked with children in 25 schools to create a Paper Meadow. This ended up at an art gallery in Port Sunlight, alongside the Flower Fairy exhibition. Having loved Cicely Mary Barker's books as child, Ling was thrilled.

So, why wildflowers in particular, what is their draw over the voluptuous cut flowers everywhere around us? ‘Have you ever looked closely at a humble dandelion or daisy? I mean, really looked? Every single flower head is a composite of hundreds of tiny flowers, the detail is staggering. They're fragile yet a powerful source of nourishment for pollinators. The fact that I can attempt to capture their beauty is amazing. I have the odd flirtation with peonies. But my heart belongs to British wildflowers.’

paperbydragonfly.com, Instagram [@paperbydragonfly](https://www.instagram.com/paperbydragonfly)

Left Ling's love of wildflowers is the focus of her work, and she wants others to discover their often-forgotten natural beauty

Above As well as creating flowers for TV and film productions, she works with community groups, children and charities



The art of doing nothing

For Diana Yates, lazy days in her Greenfield garden signal a chance to revel in nature and restore a sense of wellbeing, without the clamour of the world intruding

On this, the third day of my week-long staycation, I'm up with the larks to soak in more of the early summer garden. A gentle breeze, warm and comforting, rustles the large swathes of cow parsley – an overlooked weed by some, but a symbol of summer's entrance and the promise of a fresh season to me. I will let today unfold without a rigid plan; instead, I aim to give in

to the whims of the moment, in an effort to balance the many upcoming summer adventures penciled into my calendar.

In the cool dawn light, I'm perched outside on the old daybed, immersing myself in the early morning chorus. The kitchen garden is awash in saturated colours and dark shadows, with only touches of light on the tips of the tallest garlic and broad bean leaves. My eyes move over each

I pick a handful of the first ripe courgettes
for the cake that's on the menu this afternoon,
and keep meadow flowers cool in the shade of
a bench until it's time to bring them indoors'



raised bed, taking in the different textures and many shades of green. In no time at all, I'll be harvesting, curing and storing away some of that homegrown goodness for winter. Of course, it feels wrong even to utter the word 'winter' during the rise to summer's peak, but us gardeners are always planning for the future, aren't we?

Breakfast is simply a handful of plump peas, a couple of succulent strawberries, and a few peppery radishes, all rinsed by the water butt. The summer nights have seen double-digit temperatures for over a week now, signalling the perfect time to plant out the squash plants. Here's hoping for a myriad of weird and wonderful knobbly-shaped gourds and pumpkins in a few months' time.

Minutes give way to hours and pottering gives way to lunch, which is served picnic-style with my daughters for company. We chat, snooze and cloud-watch the early afternoon away. My eye lands on a peacock butterfly as it perches on a drumstick allium in the potager. It's taken years, but the mix of pollinator-attracting plants seems to be paying off as more and more species make a home here. Squinting my eyes against the sun, I look up at my home, overexposed by sunrays on white paint. I can almost hear its 246-year-old bones breathe a sigh of relief as the heat of the day bakes the stone. Trying to sleep in the trapped muggy heat later will be interesting, however.

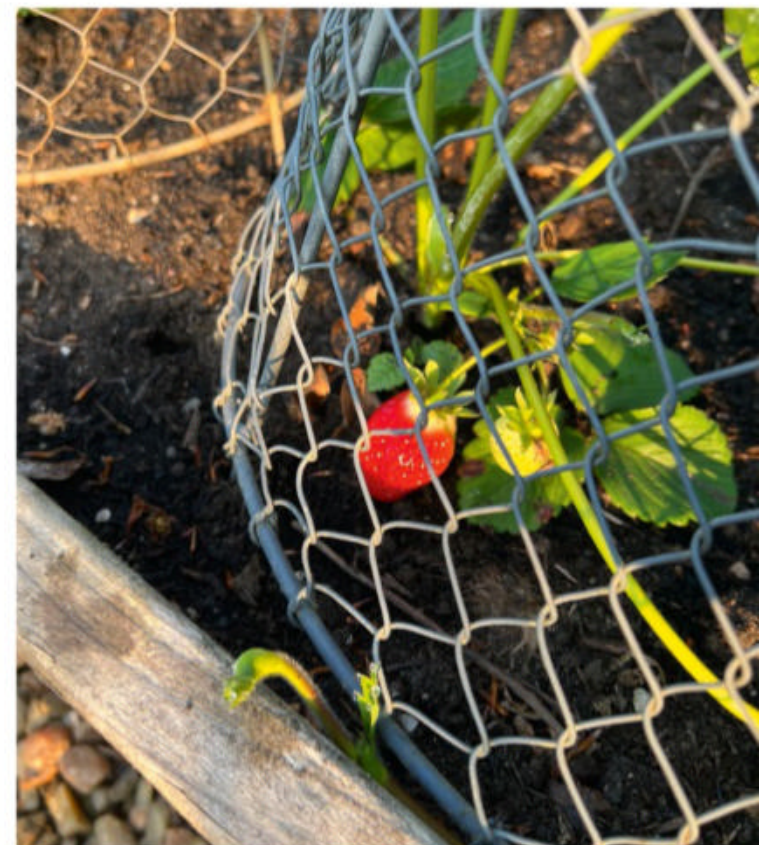
I pick a handful of the first ripe courgettes and collect the jug of meadow flowers I tucked under the bench in the shade before heading indoors. A courgette cake – or, as we like to call it, 'zucchini bread', which sounds far healthier – is on the menu for later this afternoon.

As much as I cherish purpose in life, days without any predefined agenda feel equally necessary. In a world hurtling with stimuli from →



TAKING IT EASY

Without a fixed plan or a list of tasks to tend to, Diana makes the most of pottering around her plot – picking flowers from the meadow, keeping an eye on the raised beds and stealing strawberries for an impromptu breakfast



GARDEN TEATIME

Fresh courgette cake, made with the first ripe pickings from the garden, graces the table



every direction, I find myself setting a frequent challenge to absorb nothing but the sights and sounds of the natural world. Admittedly, this proves to be a trying task, and thoughts of where my phone is often irritate the quiet, along with guilt over spending the day doing nothing. The fact that I find this a tough challenge annoys me, but as the saying goes, if at first you don't succeed...

Yet, in the midst of these rare and simple days, the profound connection with nature I've come to treasure reappears with ease, and I relish the tranquillity it brings. The garden becomes not just a plot of land but a canvas where the beauty of nature and my own amateur-by-comparison design unfolds and changes by the minute. As the sun dips behind the hill casting an ethereal glow over the cow parsley and beyond to the darker foliage of the cutting garden, I am left feeling both tired and renewed, ready to begin again.



Courgette cake or 'zucchini bread'

MAKES TWO 907G LOAVES

3 eggs

400g brown sugar

200ml vegetable oil

2tsp vanilla extract

500g courgette, grated

700g self-raising flour

1tsp bicarbonate of soda

3tsp ground cinnamon

1 Preheat the oven to 180C/Gas 4 and grease and line your loaf tins.

2 In a large mixing bowl or stand mixer, combine the eggs, sugar, oil and vanilla extract. Squeeze out the excess water from the

courgettes before adding to the bowl, if you prefer a firmer bread.

3 Gently stir in the flour, bicarbonate of soda and cinnamon and mix until well combined.

4 Pour the mixture into two lined loaf tins and bake for 1 hour. To check they are done, insert a wooden toothpick or a skewer into the centre of the bread. If it comes out clean, it's ready. Transfer the tins to a wire rack and leave to cool in the tins before turning out.

5 Hats off to you if you can wait until the bread has cooled before having a bite. Serve with tea.

PHOTOGRAPHS ZOE BARRIE COURTESY OF PAVILION FOR GROWING AT GREENFIELDS

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A stay at The Bell

Offering heaps of charm, elevated ‘pub grub’ and luxe bedrooms, this refurbished pub offers the Cotswolds experience at its most chic

Set just off the high street in increasingly trendy Charlbury you’ll find The Bell, a characterful 17th-century coaching inn. It now forms part of the Daylesford Stays collection, following a stylish – and sustainable – refurb from the founder, Lady Carole Bamford. Having previously stayed at its sister pub, The Fox at Oddington, we had big expectations. And it didn’t disappoint.

On arrival we were shown to one of eight rooms above the pub (there are another four dog-friendly rooms above the barn; a separate dining space that’s also available for private hire). All have been individually decorated in keeping with the brand’s signature smart-rustic style – think antique furnishings, hand-blocked prints and four-poster beds fashioned from the branches of estate trees.

Downstairs, there’s a series of snuggly rooms where you can hole up and enjoy a drink and perhaps a board game or two. Exposed stone walls and a roaring log fire made for a cosy dinner setting (we visited in January), but the

RING OUR BELL

The Bell is an elegant but relaxed ‘pub with rooms’ with quirky details like the tree-trunk four poster beds

romantic orchard garden, which slopes down to a babbling stream, would be our preference in summer. There’s a pizza oven and outdoor bar set to open soon, too. The food is seasonal, simple and oh-so delicious; hearty pub classics such as fish pie, beef suet pudding and our personal favourite, apple and plum crumble, showcase local produce at its best, much of which comes from the nearby Daylesford Organic Farm.

As for the location, it felt sleepy on arrival, but a stroll around the country lanes lined with picture-perfect stone cottages soon enticed. It’s also ideally located for exploring some of the Cotswolds’ prettiest villages by car or by foot. Bourton-on-the-Water is especially lovely, while Stow-on-the-Wold is excellent for antique shopping. Charlbury also has a train station (with complimentary transfers to and from the pub) with services to London Paddington, making it the perfect weekend escape.

Rooms cost from £178 per night,
thebellatcharlbury.com

WHILE YOU’RE THERE...



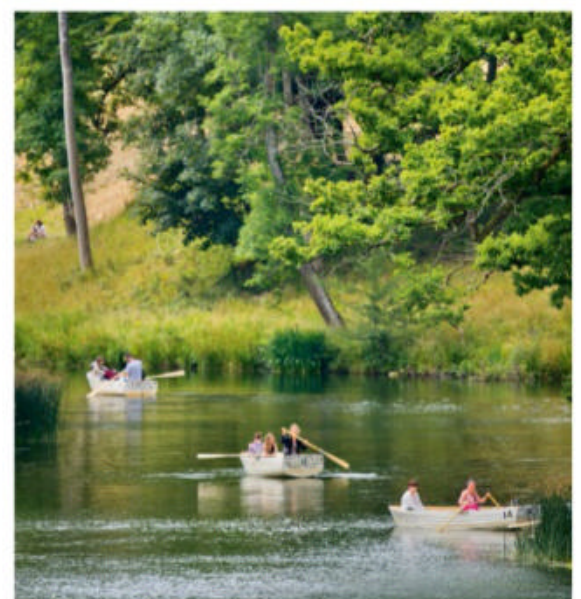
KELMSCOTT MANOR

Built around 1570, this Grade-I listed farmhouse was later the summer home of artist and designer William Morris, who described it as ‘heaven on earth’. You’ll soon see why. Take a stroll around the enchanting gardens that inspired many of his iconic designs; kelmscottmanor.org.uk



DAYLESFORD ORGANIC FARM

If you love the aesthetic and food at The Bell, a visit here should be top of your to-do list. Just 20 minutes away by car, it’s a mecca for stylish, organic living, with homeware and clothing stores, cafés and a restaurant, as well as a spa – guests at The Bell get a 10 per cent discount on spa bookings; daylesford.com



CORNBURY PARK ESTATE

There are plenty of walking opportunities from the door of The Bell, some of which take you through the ancient forests of this 1,700-acre estate. Worth a visit at any time, it’s also the venue for the annual Wilderness Festival, which is taking place from 1-4 August this year; cornburypark.co.uk



FEATURE TARA KING PHOTOGRAPH (CORNBURY PARK) ALAMY

Tastes from the garden

Buds, blossoms, roots and leaves, freshly picked from your plot, can infuse recipes with delicate and earthy flavours



**SUNFLOWER SEED
TAHINI DRESSING
WITH MIXED LEAVES,
GRAPES, ALMONDS
AND PARMESAN**



ASPARAGUS
PRIMROSA

Sunflower seed tahini dressing
with mixed leaves, grapes,
almonds and Parmesan

SERVES 4

While true tahini is made with toasted sesame seeds, sunflower seeds make a perfectly delicious alternative.

FOR THE SUNFLOWER
TAHINI PASTE

- 150g hulled sunflower seeds
- 1tbsp cold-pressed sunflower oil or olive oil
- Pinch of salt, or to taste
- 50g sunflower seed tahini (see above)
- 30g plain yoghurt
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 2tbsp light olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon

- 1½tsp maple syrup, or to taste
- Salt and black pepper
- FOR THE SALAD
- 200g mustardy greens, such as wild rocket, watercress and red mustard, washed
- 100g sweet red grapes, halved
- 25g toasted flaked (slivered) almonds
- 25g toasted sunflower seeds
- 10g Parmesan, shaved
- sunflower petals, to garnish

- 1 For the sunflower tahini paste, preheat the oven to 180C/ Gas 4. Spread the seeds over a baking sheet. Place in the oven for 10-15 minutes until golden, shake the tray a couple of times while the seeds are cooking so they toast evenly.
- 2 Place the toasted seeds in a blender and add 3tbsp of water. Blitz, slowly pouring in the oil until you get a smooth paste. Season with salt to taste and store in an airtight jar in the refrigerator.
- 3 To make the dressing, blend the sunflower seed tahini, yoghurt and garlic to a smooth purée, then stir in the olive oil, lemon juice and enough water to create a pourable sauce. Season with salt and pepper and enough maple syrup to sweeten to your taste.
- 4 Place the washed greens and half of the grapes, almonds and sunflower seeds into a large mixing bowl, pour over the dressing and toss through the salad, covering the leaves well. Spoon the dressed salad into a serving bowl and sprinkle with the remaining grapes, nuts and seeds, shaving over the fresh Parmesan. Serve immediately as a side salad or alone as a light lunch.

Asparagus primrosa

SERVES 4

Asparagus spears start emerging from the soil as primroses are flowering. The lemon, almost buttery flowers make a delicious dressing.

- 1tbsp primrose-infused white wine vinegar (see below)
- 1tsp honey
- 1tsp wholegrain or Dijon mustard
- 3tbsp light olive oil
- 1 small shallot, finely chopped
- 1tbsp capers, finely chopped
- Handful of primrose flowers and leaves
- 1 bunch of asparagus spears
- Salt and black pepper, to taste

TO MAKE THE VINEGAR

- 500ml jug full of primrose flowers
- 350ml white wine vinegar

- 1 To make the primrose-infused vinegar, blend the primrose flowers with the white wine vinegar. Once the flowers have been puréed into the vinegar, leave them to infuse for 24 hours before straining out and bottling the infused vinegar.
- 2 Prepare the dressing by whisking together the infused vinegar, honey, mustard and olive oil. Stir through the shallot and capers. Coarsely chop half of the primrose flowers and stir into the dressing. Leave the vinaigrette to macerate for 30 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.
- 3 Snap the woody ends off the asparagus (you can use these in soups). Steam the tender stems for 5 minutes or until just starting to become tender, then drain and place on a serving platter. Spoon the vinaigrette over the asparagus spears and toss until well covered. Coarsely chop or pull apart the remaining primrose flowers and finely slice the leaves into grass-like slivers, then scatter over the dressed asparagus.
- 4 Serve as a simple starter, or with a boiled egg as a light lunch. ➔



SMOKED MACKEREL
AND FLOWERING CURRANT
PÂTÉ WITH APPLE AND
RHUBARB SALSA

Smoked mackerel
and flowering currant
pâté with apple and
rhubarb salsa

SERVES 4

Both rhubarb and flowering currants are delicious served with smoked mackerel pâté, cutting through the rich oiliness. Serve on rolls or toast.

2 whole smoked mackerel fillets, skinned

2tsp horseradish sauce

2tbsp crème fraîche

Juice of 1 lemon

10 flowering currant flower heads, pulled apart into individual flowers

1 rhubarb stalk

1 firm apple

1 shallot

1 small bunch of dill and/or chervil

4 white rolls or 8 slices of toast

Salt and black pepper, to taste

1 Place the mackerel in a blender with the horseradish, crème fraîche, half the lemon juice and a good grinding of black pepper. Blend to a rough paste, then add most of the currant flowers (reserve a few for garnish) and pulse to combine. Season with salt to taste and chill until needed.

2 Finely dice the rhubarb, apple and shallot, place in a bowl and stir through the remaining lemon juice. Chop most of the herbs (reserving a few leaves for garnish) and stir into the fruit and shallot mixture.

3 Spread the pâté onto the bread or toast, top with the salsa and sprinkle over the reserved currant flowers and herb leaves pulled into small pieces.

Peony root soup

SERVES 4

The dried roots of *Paeonia lactiflora* are a well-known herb in Chinese medicine, traditionally used for the skin as well as immune and mood-related conditions.

30g white peony root
(gathered in autumn or
winter, when dividing)

1tsp light olive oil

2 leeks, finely chopped

3 celery sticks, finely
chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

½ red chilli, finely diced

Thumb-sized piece of fresh
root ginger, finely grated

200g green peas

1tsp salt

Black pepper, to taste

TO SERVE

40g watercress, chopped

20g fresh parsley, chopped

½ a pear, peeled, cored
and sliced

Dried peony flowers, to
garnish (optional)

1 Put the peony root in a saucepan, add 1 litre water and simmer for 25 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, heat the olive oil in a large pan, then sweat the leeks, celery and garlic until soft.

3 Strain the root-infused water into the pan with the softened vegetables, then add the chilli and grated ginger. Simmer for a few minutes, then stir in the peas and simmer for a further 5 minutes, or until the peas are cooked. Add the salt and some black pepper, then taste and adjust to suit.

4 Serve hot or chilled, topped with the watercress, parsley, sliced pear and dried peony flowers, if using.



Buds and Blossoms
by Liz Knight
(£28, Hardie Grant)

FEATURE ANDRÉA CHILDS
PHOTOGRAPHS KIM LIGHTBODY



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Bohemian rhapsody

Gardening Bohemia: Bloomsbury Women Outdoors is a new exhibition at the Garden Museum exploring the green spaces created by Vanessa Bell at Charleston, Virginia Woolf at Monk's House, Vita Sackville-West at Sissinghurst and Lady Ottoline Morrell at Garsington Manor. A fascinating review of planting, creativity, art and literature. Admission £14, gardenmuseum.org.uk

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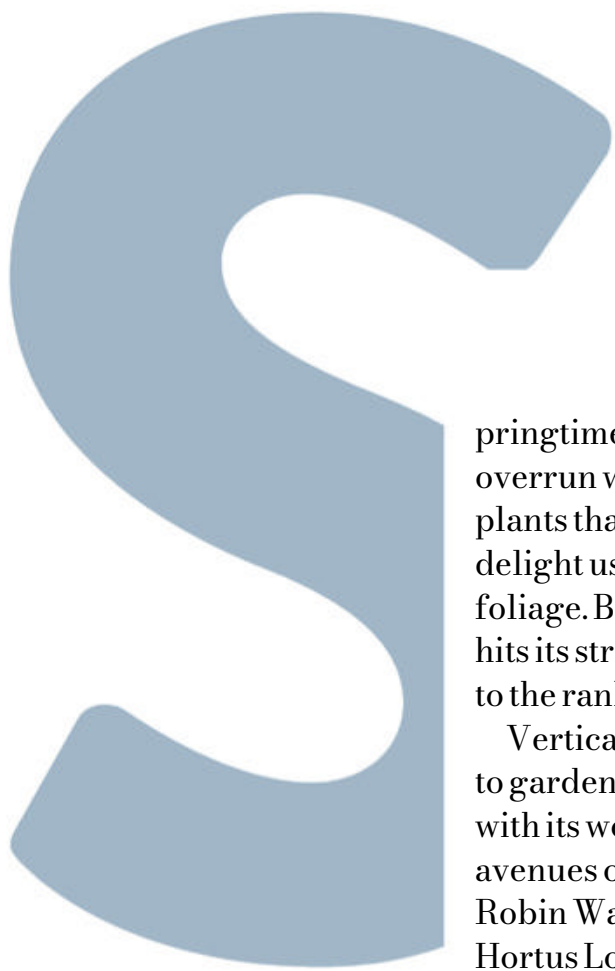


At Great Dixter, yew topiary anchors the symphony of colour, texture and variation in height of the perennial planting

TALL STORIES

Drifting through flower beds, bringing texture to borders and punctuating gardens like exclamation marks, tall plants and trees are the height of fashion





Springtime and early summer, we are overrun with diminutive, emerging plants that grow close to the soil and delight us with a carpet of colour and foliage. But as the growing season hits its stride, our eyes turn skywards to the ranks of tall plants and trees.

Verticals have always been integral to garden design. 'Think of Tuscany, with its wonderful Italian cypress avenues or Lombardy poplars,' says Robin Wallis, co-founder of nursery Hortus Loci, supplier to many a show garden as well as to private ones. 'We sell a lot of fastigate trees – those having erect branches – including evergreens, such as Irish yews and juniper 'Skyrocket' or 'Blue Arrow'. Plus narrow, upright, deciduous trees, such as liquidambar 'Slender

Silhouette' and, for smaller gardens, magnolia 'Genie'.'

Tall plants play visual tricks that we can exploit. Spaced correctly, an avenue of columnar trees makes a garden seem bigger and longer, leading the eye away from or towards a focal point. Flying hedges are another useful device – pleached hornbeam growing above eye level, for example, is great for screening an unsightly building. This type of planting is far more effective than an oversized evergreen hedge or fence, which stops the eye in its tracks.

FILTERING THE VIEW

If you can see through or just beyond the foliage, it creates an airy, spacious illusion that encourages you to look up, through or beyond whatever eyesore might be looming. In smaller gardens, multi-stemmed deciduous trees are useful – with or without leaves, the lower canopy of branches helps to filter the view.

At eye level, the same principle can be applied to borders. Perennials and grasses open up a whole different palette of rangy plants

to experiment with. Use them to add multiple layers that will dissolve the solid impact of a hard boundary or evergreen backdrop.

Straight, narrow verticals, such as lupins, verbascums and delphiniums, are classics of the cottage garden, ideal for threading colour and height through a sunny border. But for a more contemporary look there is a treasure trove of more unusual taller perennials to consider.

At Marchants Hardy Plants in East Sussex – a favourite nursery of designer Piet Oudolf – herbaceous perennials and grasses are their mainstay. Nurserywoman Hannah Fox says that when choosing taller plants to group together, it's important to consider contrasting flower shapes first, then the heights of the plants, and also to think about the plant's lifespan and what it will look like in winter. 'You might choose a spherical flower but then a vertical spike against it and an umbelliferous head with that. And we would always have the contrast of grasses.'

Her co-manager at Marchants, Henry Macaulay, adds: 'Structure comes first, because the colour of plants changes through the season. Some plants, such as veronicastrum and *Glycyrrhiza yunnanensis*, the Chinese liquorice tree, look beautiful when they've gone over. We have range of miscanthus grasses and in November they are absolutely stunning when everything else is fading away.' Hannah points out that dead plants are invaluable for supporting wildlife through winter, while visually they look 'like a forest of beautiful shapes'. By considering the whole life of a plant from coming into leaf through flowering and going to seed, you can extend interest.

COMBINING VARIETIES

Choosing plants of differing heights is a bit like composing a piece of music with higher and lower notes, crescendos and pianissimos. Hannah's go-to trio for tall, textural contrast in a sunny border includes sanguisorba (burnet) for the flowers' 'bobbly effect', veronicastrum for its strong upright spires and a miscanthus grass for softness. Henry adds: 'You don't want too many notes at the same time. The shapes create drama, while grasses give you a pause.'

Many perennials work best planted in larger numbers for impact and a more naturalistic effect. To create drifts of prairie-style height →

Top right Strong contrasting colour from lofty beauties – eremurus (foxtail lily), delphiniums and lupins – growing at varying heights creates multiple layers in this border

Bottom right Striking-red lupin spears punctuate shorter mounds of variegated grasses, mirrored by poppies (*Papaver orientalis* 'Beauty of Livermere') whose flower shape contrasts perfectly





and form, always plant in odd-numbered groups and don't be afraid to repeat these throughout the garden – it will add rhythm to the planting. You also don't want to plant in traditional amphitheatre-style, with low-growing specimens at the front to tallest at the back. Giving taller, more transparent plants space at the front and middle of the border adds a veil of texture to peer through and transform what lies beyond.

To inject some drama, you might include foxtail lilies or towering architectural showstoppers, such as a single cardoon or *Ferula communis*, rising out of a chorus of low growers. Mid-storey contrasts are important, too. Thistles and teasels with strong flowering forms and seedheads, and branching perennials, like salvias and verbenas, bring variations in form and colour through to the end of summer and beyond, just floating below eye level.

Annuals are another good way of achieving height through the summer, programmed as they are to put on a big spurt of growth. The Marchants team recommends *Persicaria orientalis* for fast-growing impact – it grows to around 3m in a season. Spectacular biennials like *Verbascum olympicum*, *Nicotiana sylvestris* or *Echium pininana* also reach dramatic heights and will self-seed.

CLIMBING PLANTS

The innate upward mobility of climbing plants is great for greening up walls, fences and pergolas, but can also be exploited for dressing obelisks and wigwams in borders and containers. Experiment with easy-growers, such as sweet peas, trailing nasturtiums or even climbing beans, to test out vertical accents, safe in the knowledge that you can try something different next year before moving on to a longer-term solution, such as clematis or roses.

It's also a good designer trick to use larger, taller plants for smaller spaces – this has an Alice-in-Wonderland effect, making the space seem bigger. As Henry explains: 'It gives you a magical sense of movement and transparency looking through the planting, and it stimulates different senses, which adds to your experience of the garden. It's like being a kid again.'

Above left Slender *Prunus serrula* (Tibetan cherry) rises above the dark foliage of *Sambucus nigra* 'Black Beauty'

Above right Lower-growing plants are glimpsed through the

pure-white upright spikes of *Veronicastrum virginicum*

Opposite Piet Oudolf's planting at Maximapark, The Netherlands, mixes grasses and perennials with varying height, shape and texture



‘Giving taller, more transparent plants

space at the front and middle of the

border adds a veil of texture to peer

through – it transforms what lies beyond’

FIND YOUR INSPIRATION

Visit the gardens at Marchants Nursery, and see the Oudolf-designed borders at Pensthorpe in Norfolk, RHS Wisley in Surrey and the Hauser & Wirth Gallery in Somerset.

FLOWER BED LARDERS

Edible flowers can add a new dimension to your cooking, introducing layers of unexpected flavour – and beauty – to mealtimes

If you've ever picked wild honeysuckle and tasted the nectar at the base of the flower, you'll be familiar with the sweet, sugary hit. No wonder bees love it. This might be a delicacy you last tried in childhood, but it's time to rediscover the joy of edible flowers. In many cultures, flowers have long been part of a broad diet of grown and foraged foods, prized for their nutritional value. But traditional gardening methods mean that for a long time, we have favoured a more separatist approach, nurturing lush green leaves, fruits and seeds for eating and flowers for ornament. We're only just beginning to reacquaint ourselves with flowers as a flavoursome and beautiful source of food.

Organic grower Sinead Fenton specialises in edible flowers at Aweside Farm in East Sussex. For her, choosing flowers as a commercial crop is partly a response to the growing demand from chefs looking to add different flavours and textures to their dishes, and cake-makers wanting more natural options for decorating. She also loves growing them because of the wildlife they bring. 'Edible flowers are really good for biodiversity. Veg growing is great, but the insects that engage with veg are completely different to the ones that are attracted to flowers,' she says.

While salads and cakes featuring pansies and marigolds are hot culinary trends, more intriguing recipes are coming to light for flowers you probably never knew you could eat. Pickled magnolias, anyone? The preserved petals develop a gingery taste. What about camellia coleslaw? Try munching on dahlia petals – the flavours range from water chestnut

and spicy apple to carrot, depending on the variety. Other surprising edible blooms include tulips, daylilies, lilacs, carnations and snapdragons. You can also stop worrying about herbs bolting as the flowers of dill and fennel bring a whole new dimension of flavours.

Pick edible flowers in the early morning on a dry day for the best flavour and colour, and store them in a plastic bag or tub for use the same day. Pull petals away from the central stamens and, with some larger flowers such as hollyhocks, remove the heel, which can be bitter. Smaller chive blooms, cornflowers and violas can be eaten whole. If you're cooking with flowers, add them at the last minute for a punch of flavour. Or to save them for later, most can be preserved by drying, pressing, crystallising or adding to cordials, jellies and jams.

Some plants are not suitable for the table and the Royal Horticultural Society advises caution. However, if you stick to tried-and-tested varieties, you can safely pick flowers from your own garden knowing that they're free from pesticides or other toxins. There's nothing quite like strolling through the garden picking homegrown produce for a summer supper, so alongside the beans, roots and salad leaves, try throwing in a few flowers, too.

PRIMROSE & PROPER

Right primroses add a delicate honey flavour to this pea and ricotta tart, by edible flower chefs Erin Bunting and Jo Facer



FLORAL NOTES

Add flavour with these suggestions from edible flower chef, Erin Bunting

- **Nasturtiums** Peppery leaves and vibrant flowers, great for spicing up salads. The hot seedpods are known as poor man's capers when pickled.

- **Calendula** Mildly spicy; mix the golden petals through salads or add whole flowers to bread.

- **Cornflowers** A slightly sweet,

clove-infused flavour. Use the petals fresh or dried, or crystallised for cake decorations.

- **Chives** The bright purple pom-pom flowers taste of mild onion. Use whole flowers in salads or add them to cheese scones.

- **Lavender** Cleansing, menthol flavour with a soft floral note; good for sweet and savoury dishes. Try with lamb or chicken as an alternative to rosemary.

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COUNTRY ROSE

This icon of British gardens enchants with colour, scent and form.
From thousands of varieties, we select a few of our favourites

**ROSA 'GHISLAINE DE
FÉLIGONDE'** The pale-apricot
blooms of this repeat-flowering
rambler have a musk scent →



1



2

1 ROSA LEANDER A tall shrub or climber with slender arching stems bearing fragrant apricot rosette-shaped flowers

2 ROSA BLUE FOR YOU Semi-double, sweetly scented flowers open in rich purple-mauve and then fade to slate blue

Offering such exquisite beauty and fragrance, and in a dazzling variety of forms, roses are the quintessential feature of the English country

garden. Species or wild, roses like to sprawl in a natural style, are mostly single-flowered and many have colourful hips in autumn – look for *R. rugosa*, *R. glauca*, *R. moyesii* and *R. canina*. Roses from before 1860 are known as old garden roses and grow as large, graceful shrubs with mostly one flowering a year. They are richly fragrant and include *Rosa x alba* and *R. gallica*, plus damask, cabbage and moss roses.

Modern roses – which are those bred from the early-20th century onwards – are repeat-flowering, with good disease resistance, vigour and flower quality. These include hybrid teas, floribunda, landscape, climbers, miniature and David Austin English roses. To add a little confusion, the diverse and versatile shrub roses don't fit any distinct classification. They can be wild rose species and also hybrids, taking the best of both worlds: the old, combined with the modern traits of repeat-flowering and diversity of form, colour and fragrance.

Late autumn is a good time to plant bare-root roses, while container-grown roses can be planted all year round. Roses are sun-loving and like well-drained soil that will hold moisture long enough for the roots to absorb it. Incorporate well-rotted compost or manure at planting. Some roses, including *R. rugosa* and a few vigorous cultivars, cope with a range of conditions, while other varieties, such as floribunda and shrub roses, can tolerate shade, as long as it isn't caused by trees. Check the label carefully for shade tolerance and don't plant roses in exposed spots, as wind can damage blooms and cause evaporation of moisture from foliage. Place about one metre from other plants and about 60cm from another rose.

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3



4



5



6

3 ROSA 'BALLERINA' Sprays of light-pink single blooms with white centres repeat-flower all summer on this shrub rose

4 ROSA JACQUELINE DU PRÉ Dainty blush-white semi-double blooms with pink stamens and a light musk scent

5 ROSA DUCHESS OF CORNWALL An old-fashioned hybrid tea rose with cupped, scented salmon-pink blooms

6 ROSA GRAHAM THOMAS This upright English shrub rose has lightly scented cupped blooms of rich, pure yellow



LIGHT & SHADOW

Rather than a loss to your garden, a lack of sunlight allows you to bring depth with shade-loving plants, says Sarah Raven

Without much sunlight, we are all a bit more restricted in what we can grow but sometimes that can be a good thing, narrowing the choices down a little. In shade we all need to be cleverer with shapes and forms, rather than colours. To get darker spaces glowing and brighter than they truly are, white or eau-de-nil and soft pale green are your best flower colours, alongside strong leaf shapes. Here, based on 30 years of gardening, are my shade-tolerant favourites.

ANNUALS & BIENNIALS

There's a limit on what will grow and perform in shade. In autumn, we plant out as many white and soft-pink foxgloves as we can fit, allowing them to settle in well over the winter (they're totally hardy) before the demands of

flowering. Alongside these, once the frosts are over, we plant *Nicotiana sylvestris* and *N. 'Grandiflora'*, which are exceptional among annuals as they are happy in shade.

BULBS

For spring, we stick with pale colours – you can have the lightest scattering of another colour (such as purple or blue) but the overall effect needs to be white. We plant 'Exotic Emperor' and 'Purissima' tulips, as well as the delicate white daffodils 'Thalia' and 'Silver Chimes'. In summer and autumn, we move onto the lilies, *Lilium regale* 'Album' followed by *L. speciosum* 'Album', leaving them in from one year to the next, to flower up our dappled shade.

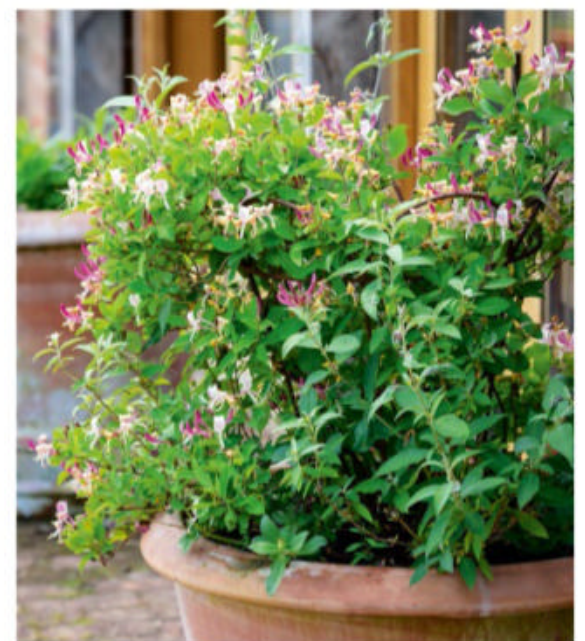
GROUND COVER

There are a couple of plants that will knit everything together and prevent weeds. The first is a white periwinkle (*Vinca minor* f. *alba* 'Gertrude Jekyll'). I also love sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*) with whorls of bright green leaves and a confetti of white, scented flowers in spring.

SHADE CONTAINERS

As well as any of the bulbs already mentioned, and the tobacco flower, *Nicotiana* 'Grandiflora', which are brilliant for pots, there are a couple of plants perfect for permanent pots in shade corners. The first is *Hydrangea* 'Little Lime', which has a beautiful progression of flower colour. We also love the exceptional honeysuckle, 'Chic et Choc'. It reaches just over a metre when fully grown.

The 'Chic et Choc' honeysuckle is exceptionally long-flowering. It smells fabulous and is perfect for a good-sized pot in the shade



FEATURE SARAH RAVEN
PHOTOGRAPHS JONATHAN BUCKLEY

GARDEN PLANTS FOR SHADE

Bring vibrancy and texture to a shaded area. Sarah shares four shade loving plants that will add interest and cool, bright blooms to your garden



1 AMELANCHIER ARBOREA 'ROBIN HILL'

I love its simple, airy blossom in spring, the crimson to purple berries in June, and flame-coloured leaves in autumn. My current number one for the top layer is a compact *Amelanchier* (or *Snowy Mespilus*). We have planted it against a north-facing wall, where it gets sun only for a few hours a day, and it's thriving.

2 ACANTHUS 'RUE LEDAN'

With its sculptural dark and glossy green leaves, this is a handsome plant. However dry and hot the season is, it never gets mildew. If I had room for only one shade-loving perennial, *Acanthus* 'Rue Ledan' would be my choice. It dies down briefly in winter but emerges with great gusto in early spring. In May, huge flower spikes, like jagged-edged spears, erupt up to nearly my height, covered with ivory napkin flowers all summer.

3 HYDRANGEA 'INCREDIBALL' WITH H. 'LIMELIGHT'

Ballooning up from ground level there can be no better family for a shaded border than hydrangeas. We have the *Hydrangea* 'Incrediball' with *H.* 'Limelight' planted outside our kitchen window. The latter is impressive with soft, ivory-green flower globes the size of a man's head! I'm often fooled into thinking someone is coming to the door.

4 TULIPS 'EXOTIC EMPEROR'

For spring, in shade we stick with pale colours such as these tulips – ivory, white, cream and pale yellow plants, shining light into any gloomy corner.

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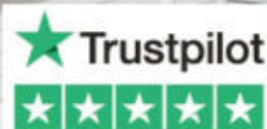
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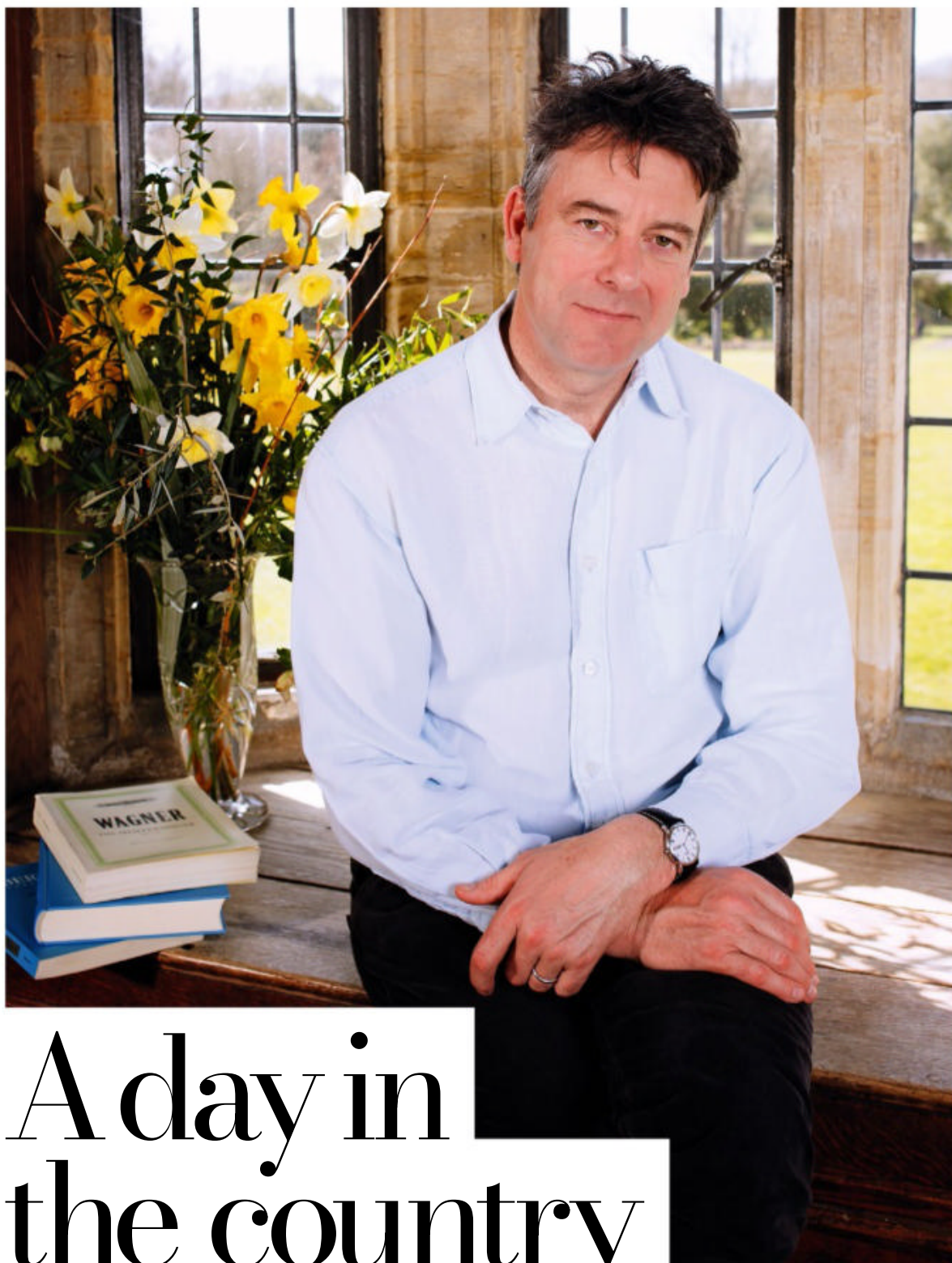
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GUS CHRISTIE



A day in the country

The day starts close to home for the executive chairman of the Glyndebourne Festival, with a cycle through the hills of the South Downs

Home is the Manor House at Glyndebourne, which is also home of the opera festival founded by my grandparents. The festival celebrates its 90th birthday this year, which is quite an achievement for an independently funded cultural event. We are surrounded by the South Downs, now a national park, and a walk up into the hills, through the woods and valleys, never fails to lift the spirits and alleviate the stresses.

Ideally, my family and dogs would be with me, but I am quite happy on my own if the brood or the dogs are not in the mood. I have six children – Romulus and Jackson are both 27; Alexander is 24; Ivo, 22; Bacchus, eight; and

Sheherazade is three. We also have three dogs – a Portuguese water dog, named Caesar, and two British bulldogs, Norma and her daughter, Mabel.

If I am not on the school run, I like to get out on my mountain bike. There are many different routes and an eager local group of kindred spirits to go with. I used to head out three mornings a week, but with young children, it's not as regular any more.

My weekday mornings are generally taken up with meetings connected with the opera or the Glyndebourne estate. My weekend mornings are calmer and spent with the younger children, and I always try to take the dogs out for a quick walk around the lake.

What's for lunch depends on the season. Over the winter months it's generally soup or a sandwich in the kitchen at home. And in the spring and summer, I'll eat in the canteen on site with the artists and staff working here at Glyndebourne.

During the Glyndebourne Festival, most afternoons are taken up with entertaining. Our generous donors and guests come to the opera and dine in the on-site restaurants, or else enjoy a picnic in the gardens. When I'm not hosting, I will generally spend time with the younger children and my wife, Danielle de Niese, who is an opera singer.

At the end of the day I'll put the children to bed. I'll read them a bedtime story and quite often fall asleep before they do!

Glyndebourne Festival runs from 16 May to 25 August 2024, with ticket prices from £25-£295; see [glyndebourne.com](https://www.glyndebourne.com)

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Welcome to Gardening MADE SIMPLE

Gardening is a fantastic pastime for all ages. It gives you a new appreciation for nature, gets you out in the fresh air and does wonders for both your physical and mental health. However, with so many different plant varieties, and tasks that change all year round, delving into the world of gardening can sometimes feel overwhelming.

In Gardening Made Simple, we have compiled a compendium of beginner-friendly tips and tricks from the archives of Easy Gardens magazine. Inside you'll find step-by-step guides and expert advice, enabling you to make the most of your outdoor space throughout the year. Whether you want to liven up your borders, tidy up with some pruning, grow your own produce, or create a haven for wildlife, this book is packed with ideas and inspiration to help you along the way.

So if you're ready to develop those green fingers, let's get started...

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ASK THE EXPERTS



Your guide to getting **GREEN FINGERS**

As the saying goes, you reap what you sow
– but where to start and what to grow?

What comes to mind when you think of gardening? For some it might be a chore to rake the leaves or mow the lawn, but for others gardening evokes every sense; the smell of honeysuckle on the breeze; the sound of the robin's first call in the morning alerting the other birds he has made it through the night; picking the first dahlias you have tended to and tasting the first strawberries you have lovingly grown. It is about learning to appreciate nature and how to respond to it, noticing the changes of the seasons by the colour of the leaves or the heads of the daffodils breaking through the soil to announce the end of winter, hailing the beginning of spring.

The first thing you will discover when you start gardening is that you will never stop learning; there will always be new methods to try and varieties of plants to grow, which is why studying plants and how to read them is key to establishing a healthy and thriving garden. Seasons and weather will always be unpredictable but that just adds to the magic!

To begin with, things may seem a little daunting – all those sowing dates, times and tips – not to mention the Latin names, but there is always help to be found from the numerous online communities, gardening groups, books, magazines and your local garden centre.

The benefits of gardening are numerous, from improved fitness to increased levels of vitamin D and stress relief. It is so good that many doctors are even writing prescriptions for it! It might be something you enjoy doing alone for some peace and quiet, to be at one with nature, but it can also be a way of meeting new people and getting involved with local projects such as community or market gardens, or an opportunity to pass the time of day and reconnect with a neighbour over the garden fence. It is also a great way to teach children where their food comes from, and it can provide some biology lessons when learning about plant growth, soil types and ecosystems. After all, your garden is not just your sanctuary,

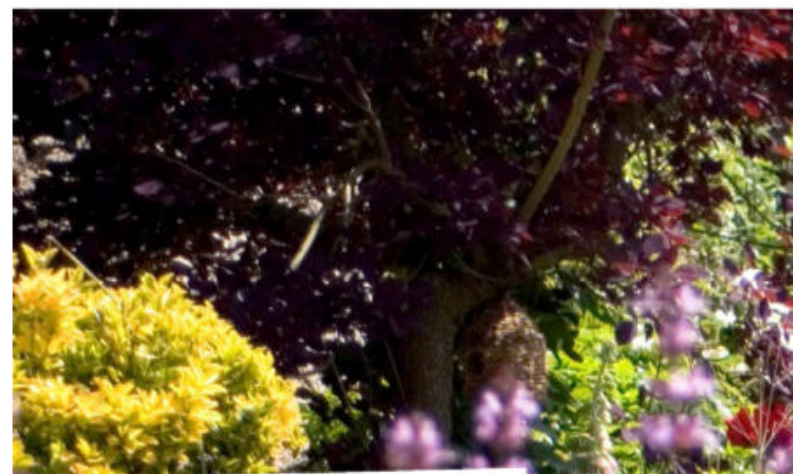
it is also a vital home for birds, small mammals and our crucial pollinators.

Deciding what your garden's purpose will be is the first step as you embark on your outdoor adventure. Will it be minimalist and low-maintenance, a quintessential English country garden, a haven for nature, or a space worthy of a spot at the next Chelsea Flower Show? Will you need a spot for children to play, or an area that will be safe from a destructive family pet, somewhere you can relax with a large G&T at the end of a long week?

Once you have a firm idea of what you'd like to do with your garden, it's time to get your hands dirty. Tidying your space is a good way to reveal its potential. Clear up leaves, mow the lawn, weed and dig over the flower beds and sort out pots and planters. Then pop the kettle on and, with a fresh eye, get planning. You can be

adventurous in your design, but you will also need to be practical.

Take enough time to get to know your garden and consider how it changes with each season. Pay careful attention to where the sun is at different times of the day. A west-facing garden will provide you with afternoon sun, while an east-facing garden will enjoy morning rays. Similarly, a north-facing fence or wall will be cooler



than a south-facing one, which will be warmer and better for growing more exotic plants like wisteria, jasmine or passion flowers.

Your location should play a huge part in your plant decision making. In the UK, for example, the north of the country is both colder and wetter than the warmer south (although it might not always feel like it). Built-up urban and city areas also tend to be warmer than the more exposed countryside. Then there is the direction of the wind to consider. Strong winds can dry soil out, damage plants and bring with them varying weather conditions.

Another crucial thing to know is what type of soil you are working with. Is it peat, silt, clay, chalk, loam or sand? The answer will help you to get an idea of what you can grow. Then it's up to you to decide on what varieties you want to grow. Take a stroll around your neighbourhood and see what is growing well and what you might also like, and if you're unsure, take a soil test and ask for advice at the garden centre.

Learning how to combine plants is another essential part of your design process. After all, you want to have something to tend to and admire year round, not just in the warmer months. You also want your plants to get on with each other! The following attributes need to be considered: what type of plant is it, how big is it – and how big will it get – when is its season and what colour is it? The shape of its blooms and foliage are also important.

One of the most enjoyable parts of gardening is playing around with colour to create depth. Different shades of the same colour can actually make smaller gardens look bigger. Mix different styles together or plant all the same colour with varying heights, textures and foliages. Experiment with clashing or contrasting colours,

or alternatively, fashion a more unified and harmonious scheme.

Your space is your own private blank canvas. It might be a shady corner or a collection of pots on the doorstep or balcony, but it is for you to make your vision come to life. Creating your dream garden begins with gathering inspiration and a bit of careful planning and research. Create a plan or mood board to document your ideas and get a clearer picture of what you can plant where and what will grow well. Consider structure, colour and growing conditions before you hit the garden centre and are hypnotised by all the beautiful plants. But most importantly, enjoy what you are doing and the nature surrounding you, take plenty of tea breaks to relax and admire your hard work, and always remember that Mother Nature will ultimately have the final say.

“Take time to get to know your garden and how it changes with each season”



Gardening fosters a personal connection to the natural world

Grow your own NATURAL HEALTH SERVICE

We all know the benefits of diet and exercise for physical and mental health, but what might come as a surprise is that gardening can in fact burn calories – almost as many as a game of badminton, and it's far more relaxing than chasing after shuttlecocks!

The great outdoors has long been associated with better health, but studies have shown that gardening can help maintain independence, reduce anxiety and depression, and even assist in preventing cognitive decline. Researchers in the Netherlands found that people living near areas of wilderness, urban parks or what has been termed 'green spaces' actually had lower cases of illnesses such as asthma, diabetes, depression and heart disease. Research also found hospital patients that had a room with a natural view recovered quicker. Gardening really is the secret to a healthy and happy life.



"Keep your face always
toward the sunshine and
shadows will fall behind
you" – Walt Whitman



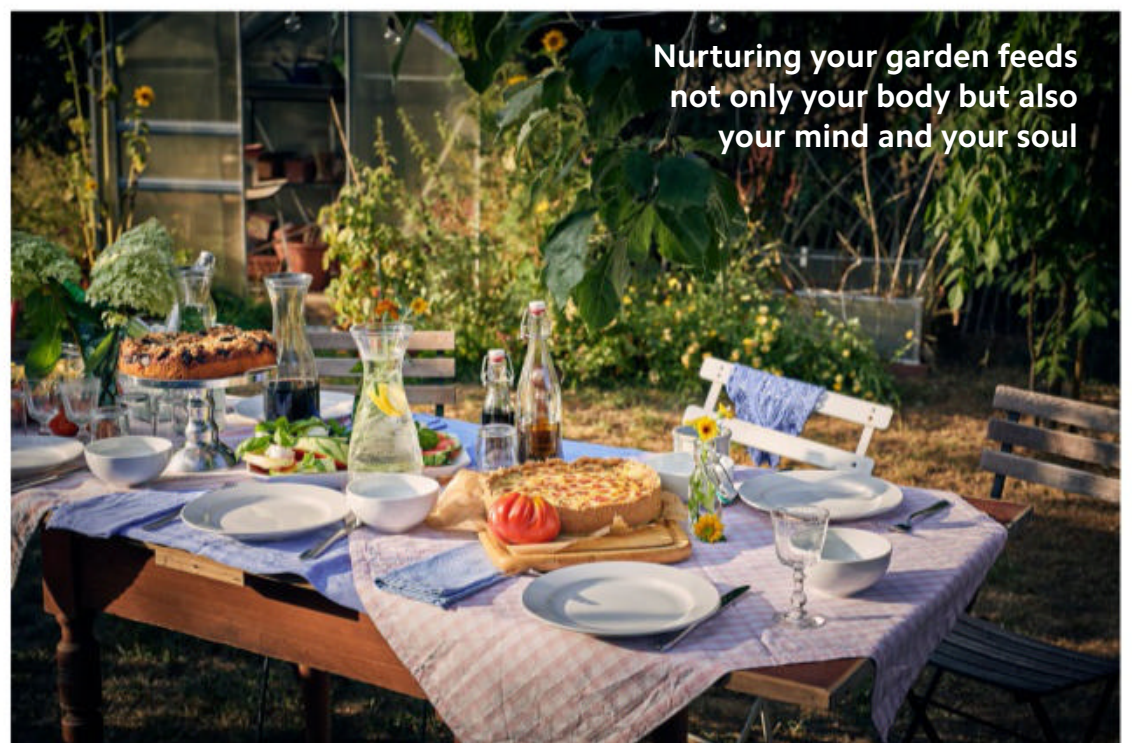
Careful planning and
research will ensure
positive results

Plant labels will guide you with useful information



With proper care, plants will thrive no matter the size of your space

Nurturing your garden feeds not only your body but also your mind and your soul



GROWING YOUR OWN

Imagine a picnic table in your garden laid for a summer's lunch, the salads and fruit grown from your vegetable patch, the meal seasoned with herbs from your pots, and a large jug of scented flowers picked from your flower beds. Being able to feed your family fresh produce from a constant supply just a stone's throw from your kitchen door is not only healthy and hugely satisfying but also fantastic from an environmental aspect. No plastic packaging or need to travel to purchase it, plus you can pick what you need when you need it, which reduces waste. Any old produce can go straight in the compost bin and be returned to the soil next season.

HAND TROWEL

Small yet mighty, the hand trowel can be used for numerous jobs in the garden. Choose one with a handle that fits your hand comfortably. Those with stainless steel heads are more hardwearing. Narrow blade trowels are particularly good for weeding and digging up rocky soil.



Essential GARDEN TOOLS

Ensuring that you have the right equipment to hand will make gardening easier and much more enjoyable

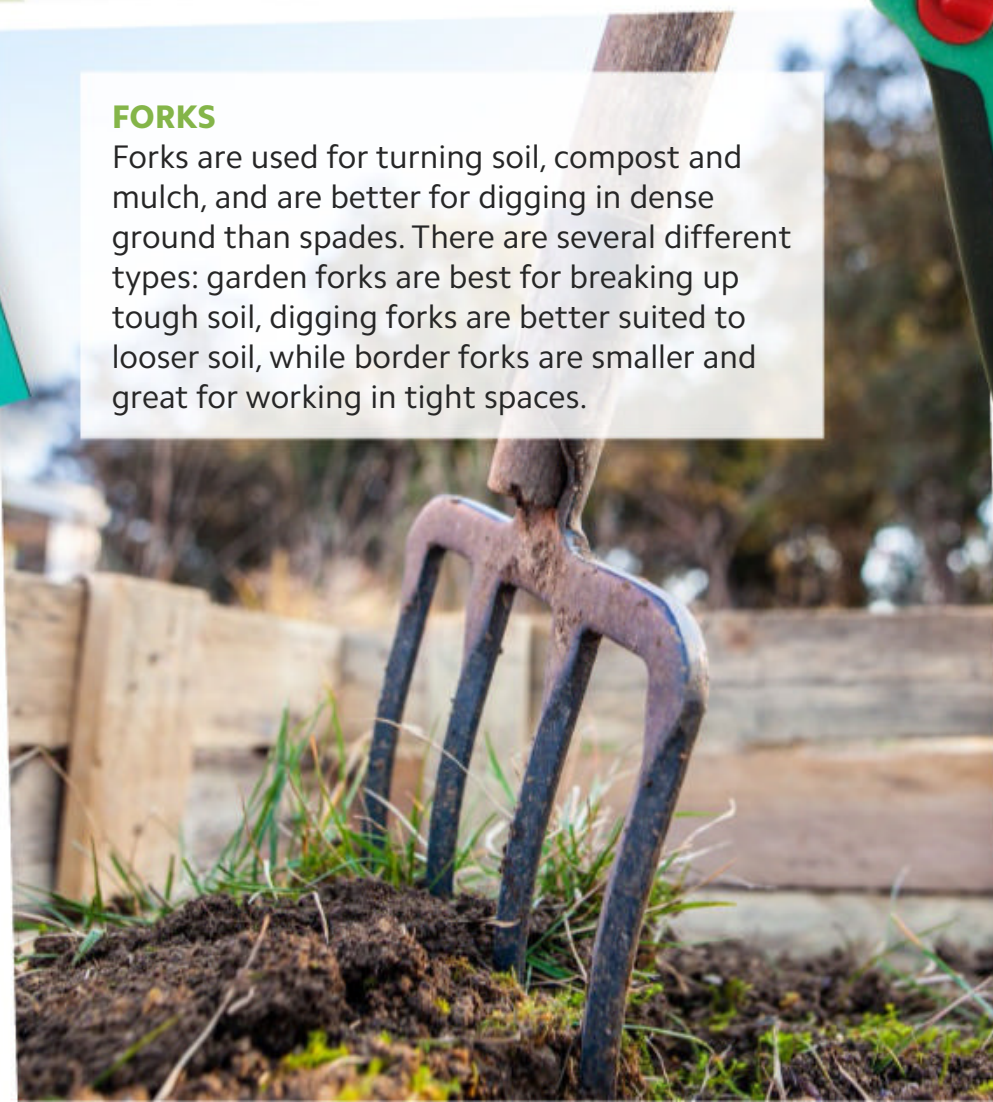
GARDEN HOE

Hoes are the tool to grab when you need to cut down weeds and prep your flower beds. When selecting a hoe you need one with a long reach and a comfortable handle. In addition, you will need to select the correct head for your gardening needs.



FORKS

Forks are used for turning soil, compost and mulch, and are better for digging in dense ground than spades. There are several different types: garden forks are best for breaking up tough soil, digging forks are better suited to looser soil, while border forks are smaller and great for working in tight spaces.



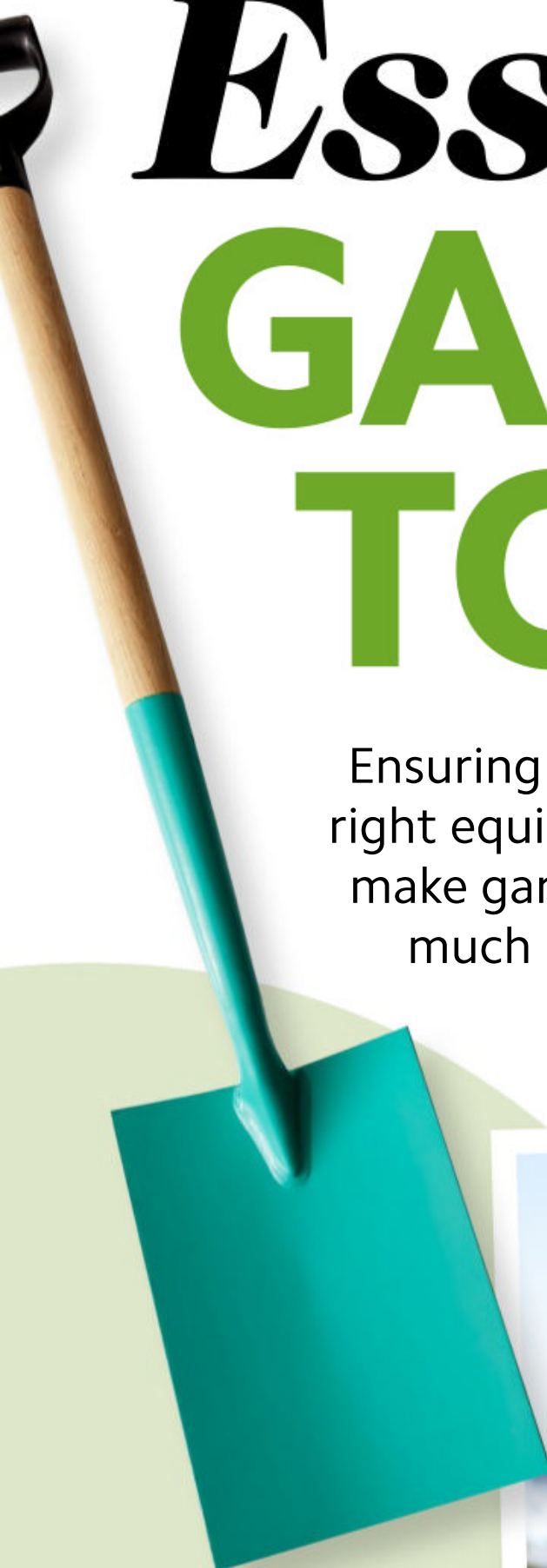
SECATEURS

Secateurs are an absolute must-have hand tool for pruning. Be sure to keep them clean, well oiled and sharpen them regularly, and they will serve you well for many years.



SPADE

Spades come in several varieties, with different handles (some wooden and others coated metal) and heads and varying lengths of shaft. Before purchasing, try a few in the shop to get a feel for which suits you best.





GARDENING GLOVES

Avoid sore and thorny hands with well-fitting, durable gardening gloves. Invest in good-quality gloves that are breathable and made from water-resistant fabrics. 'Gauntlet'-style gloves feature longer cuffs to protect your wrists from scratches.



STANDARD RAKE

A standard leaf rake is a great first addition to your garden shed. Choose one with steel tines rather than plastic as they are much stronger, and make sure you buy an adjustable model so you can alter it to fit into any area when raking debris and fallen leaves.



WATERING CAN

Watering cans come in all shapes, colours and sizes, with varying nozzle options. Metal cans, while heavier, tend to be longer-lasting than a plastic alternative. Try a two-handed design as they are easier to pour from and ideal for older gardeners and children.



LOPPERS

Similarly to secateurs, loppers are a long cutting tool that can reach those high-up, difficult-to-reach areas, allowing you better leverage and thickness when pruning and lopping branches.

WHEELBARROW

A wheelbarrow is a must for moving and lifting jobs. Although there are many models to choose from, some are lighter to manoeuvre than others. Just remember to inflate the wheels regularly to keep things moving evenly.



Growing FROM SEEDS

With the right care and conditions, you can grow all manner of plants from seed... and it's easy on your wallet, too

When it comes to gardening, few activities are more grounding and rewarding than planting seeds and watching something grow from almost impossibly small beginnings. It is also a very economical way to grow a greater range of flowers and produce – including some of the more unique and diverse plants like heirloom or heritage varieties.

To put it simply, growing from seeds is far cheaper than buying plugs or ready-grown plants, and it's a much more rewarding way to fill your garden with flowers and produce. With so many different varieties of seeds available you are also guaranteed plenty of choice, allowing you to be creative when deciding what to grow in your space. For example, there are over 10,000 varieties of tomato grown around the world for consumption, all differing in taste, colour and size. These varieties have been developed by gardeners over the centuries and adapted to a country's individual microclimate. The same has been done with other vegetables and of course flowers, giving the grower the strongest, healthiest and most colourful blooms. Growing from seeds gives you the added pleasure of experiencing the process of seed-to-plate (or vase) and a sense of achievement from watching something you have nurtured flourish.

Seeds can be divided into two main categories: perennials and annuals. The difference between them is that perennials live on average for three-plus years while annuals will complete their life cycle in one single growing season. When you take a closer look at your seed packets, however, you will notice some interesting twists, including tender perennial, hardy and half-hardy annual. There is even a third category that combines some of the characteristics of annuals and perennials known as a biennial.

If this is all starting to sound a little like a biology class, or if you are new to gardening, then something simple like Nigella (love in a mist) or sweetpeas might be a good option for a first attempt.

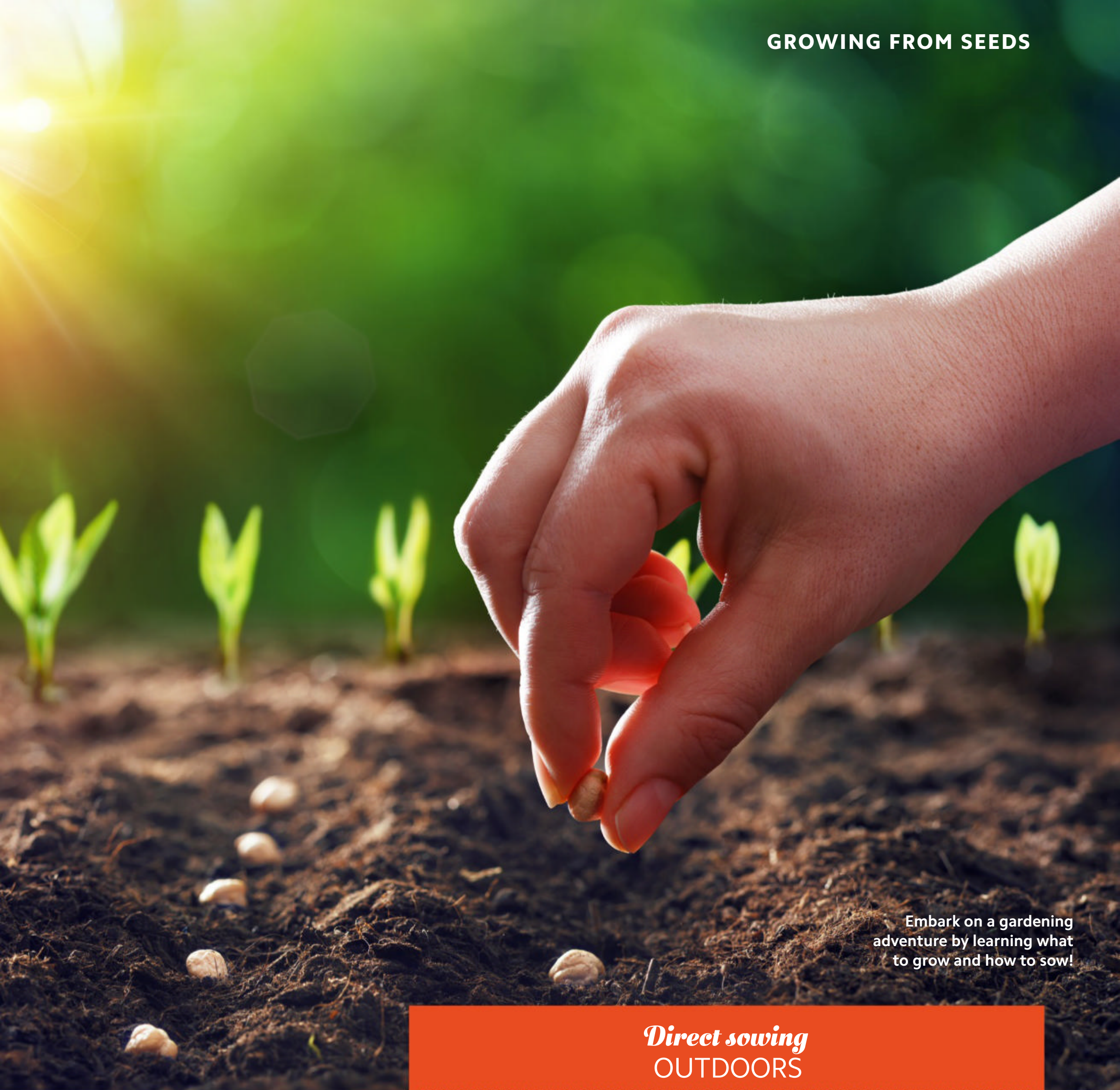
Seeds can be purchased online or from a seed catalogue, but if you can make the time, visit your local garden centre so you can get an idea of what's available and ask for advice if you have any questions.

It's important to consider where you will eventually plant your seeds and what might grow well together. Companion



Seeds enable you to grow a wide variety of vegetables and flowers





Embark on a gardening adventure by learning what to grow and how to sow!

Direct sowing OUTDOORS

planting can be hugely beneficial. An example of this is growing nasturtiums alongside tomato plants, which won't just give a burst of colour, but black fly and aphids will attack them and leave your vegetables alone.

Another thing to think about is a seed's requirements, which include appropriate soil temperatures, how much light it requires to germinate, and how much water it will require.

Full information for each individual seed and guidance can be found on the back of the seed packet, detailing where and how to sow. It can often take several weeks from sowing to flowering, but it is definitely worth the wait.

Many vegetables need to be directly sown in the garden. This is where the seed is planted in shallow trenches known as drills. Drills are made using a hand trowel or the edge of a garden hoe. Once in place, cover the seed with a light sprinkling of soil, pat it down and give it a drink.

- Before you start sowing, make sure you clear any weeds from your patch. Break the soil down to a consistency of fine breadcrumbs on the surface and make sure that the bottom of the drill (trench) is moist enough. If not, grab your watering can and give it a quick water.
- The seed packet will always advise on the right time to sow your seeds, but your garden and the weather are also a good guide. Remember that your seeds will only germinate when the temperature is warm enough. Most need their soil to be approximately 7°C (45°F).
- When filling the drills, try to sow your seeds as finely as possible. For larger seeds like peas you will need to sow each seed individually with plenty of space in between.
- Once sown, press the soil down over the seeds lightly.



Step-by-step... SOWING & GROWING

There are three main ways of sowing seeds: indoor sowing, outdoor sowing and protected outdoor sowing. Many seeds can be directly sown into your garden soil once your desired spot has been prepared, but others will need to be started off in containers indoors and later transplanted once they are strong and the outdoor weather temperatures are right. Some species are more sensitive than others and will require varying degrees of care. Sowing times will differ greatly between plant types. Weather and development stage will also be a factor when deciding when to move your seedlings outdoors.

1 MAKING YOUR SELECTION

Choosing your seeds and designing your flower patch is great fun. Deciding on which colours to choose or selecting your favourite vegetables is a reflection of your personality. Seeds that are started indoors benefit greatly from being protected from disease, pests and other fungal nasties, which they may experience outdoors, thereby allowing them to grow stronger until they are ready to be transplanted when the time is right. Seeds sown indoors also tend to benefit from a greater number of germinated seeds as you are able to control the conditions in which the seeds are growing.

2 EQUIPMENT

Having the right equipment is essential, but it doesn't need to be costly. You can use recycled items like paper cups, yoghurt pots or egg boxes. Provided your container has a depth of approximately three inches and small holes for drainage at the bottom then you are good to grow! Modular trays and seed trays are ideal for the job as you can spread the seeds out so that they have space to breathe and grow. Next you will need to select your soil. Peat-free multi-purpose compost or a seed/potting compost that is finer and contains vital nutrients to help your seeds grow. Soil from the garden can often contain high levels of disease and insects that could damage your seeds, so it is important to plant in soil designed for the task. You will also need plant labels, a waterproof pen, dibber and a watering can with a rose attachment or a water mister.



Top tip

Add a label so you know what you have sown and when.

3 SOWING YOUR SEEDS

Once you have your containers at the ready it is time to fill them up with soil. Prior to doing so, tip your soil into a bucket and moisten. Then fill your chosen containers approximately three-quarters full of soil, spread your seeds on the top (as instructed on the packet) and cover with a light sprinkling of soil. Once the containers are filled make sure to pack the soil to get rid of any air gaps – not too hard though as you don't want to compact it.

4 GERMINATION

Once sown, cover your container lightly, either with some damp newspaper or plastic sheeting, to trap in moisture and regulate temperature. This is very important as the seeds will not germinate properly if they are too dry. Ideally try to keep the room at a steady temperature and ensure there is bright light to allow the seeds to grow. When the first shoot pokes through the soil it is time to remove the newspaper or plastic cover. Be sure to keep the seedlings moist by watering gently. You can use a water mister for this task. If you don't have a propagator, conservatory or greenhouse, then window sills are always a good solution. You could also consider a heat mat, but be careful to make sure the temperature isn't too high as you don't want to burn your seedlings.

5 REPOTTING

Now that the germinated seeds have begun to grow, it's time to give them space to stretch their roots by pricking them out and giving them fresh nutrients. Pricking out and transferring seeds is particularly important if you have grown several seeds in a seed tray. Once the seed has grown its first true pair of leaves (leaves that resemble the grown plant) take your dibber or a pencil if you prefer and carefully lever the seedling's roots out of the compost. Hold the seedling by its leaves and not the stem as they are easily damaged. Transfer your seedlings into fresh pots or modular trays with new potting soil or peat-free multi-purpose compost. Make a small hole in the soil with your pencil or dibber and pop your seedling in. The surface of the compost needs to come up roughly to the lowest leaves of the seedling. Firm the surrounding compost gently around the seedling. Give your seedlings a careful drink of water using your watering can with the rose attachment on.



6 HARDENING OFF

Now that your seedlings are starting to resemble small plants it is time to harden them off. Once your plants have three or four true leaves, they can be gradually exposed to the outside world. This will allow them to grow a firmer plant tissue, a bit like a thick protective skin. By exposing the plants to the external conditions of wind, rain and sun, you reduce the risk of what is called transportation shock. A week or two before the move, start to bring them outdoors during the day and place them in a well-shaded spot for a few hours. Gradually increase the time spent outside but do be sure to bring them back inside at night. Once strong enough they can then carry on their journey towards being planted out when the conditions are right.

7 MAKING THE MOVE OUTSIDE

Pick a moving day when the weather is overcast so that your plants aren't exposed to direct sunlight. Using a hand trowel, dig a small hole just deep enough to fit your plant's root ball in. Space each hole evenly from each other, allowing sufficient room for the plant to continue growing. Check that the seedlings' pots are moist before removing. Gently push each plant from underneath the container until they pop out. Place them carefully in the holes, covering their roots with soil and giving them water. Keep compost moist but not sodden, watering from the root not the leaves.



Growing FROM BULBS

Planting bulbs is an easy way to bring beautiful bursts of colour to your garden from spring to autumn

Whether you're redesigning your garden's borders or planting up containers to decorate your balcony, bulbs can be grown almost anywhere.

Wordsworth was spot-on when he wrote of his delight at seeing "a host of golden daffodils" – spring flowers really do look best en masse. Bringing joy to public areas and gardens alike, they are hugely popular and beneficial for the pollinators, laying dormant through the winter months and waking up to surprise us with swaths of colour. After the grey gloom of January we look forward to brighter and warmer days ahead, the beginning of spring and the instant lift a flourishing garden gives. Yet bulbs are not just for spring; they can be planted year-round, with many flowering in the autumn as well.

The main benefit of planting bulbs is that they don't require a lot of room.

If you're fortunate enough to have a garden or courtyard you can of course adorn your lawn with plants or dot bulbs between other plants, but no matter where you are, there is always room for some pots on a windowsill or balcony.

Bulbs are the plant's underground food-storage organs. As such, they are self-sufficient, being able to store their energy from one season to the next, which gives them a huge advantage over other plants. Bulbs are also bountiful, especially when they are naturalised. Naturalising means leaving your bulbs where you have planted them in the garden to allow them to propagate naturally. Crocuses and daffodils, for example, do well in grass, and planting them is a great way to brighten up wildflower areas, lawns, verges and under trees to form a drift. You will be rewarded year on year with beautiful clusters of colour without any extra effort.



Bulbs can bring a bright burst of colour to your garden



Plant bulbs wherever you have space for a vibrant and colourful reward come spring



Top tip

Many gardeners recommend feeding bulbs with a liquid fertiliser high in potassium. Tomato feed is a good option. This will help to promote healthy flowering for the following year. Begin feeding when you see the first shoots appearing through the soil and continue to water throughout the season until the foliage begins to die back.

When to plant

Deciding when to plant your bulbs is the first step, and part of this choice comes down to working out when they will likely flower. Generally, unless forced indoors, autumn- and winter-flowering bulbs are planted late in the springtime to early summer; spring-flowering bulbs need to be planted in the autumn; and bulbs for summer flowering should be in the ground by the end of spring. Many of our spring favourites, such as tulips, daffodils and

hyacinths, will have been planted in the autumn for spring flowering, and once they have flowered, they die back and go to sleep over the summer months. This is known as going dormant. Gladioli, dahlias and other summer-flowering bulbs will have been planted in the spring and their time to sleep is over the winter months.

Where to buy

Your local garden centre is the best place to start when it comes to selecting which bulbs

you would like to grow in your garden. Late summer is the best time to look for spring-flowering bulbs and in turn summer bulbs become available in the springtime. Buying online is also an option and offers a much wider selection. It's worth noting that bulbs will only be dispatched when ready, so you might have to wait a little while to receive them. Ordering early is another must, as many of the more popular varieties are known to sell out quickly. Be sure to always store your bulbs somewhere cool and dark until the time comes to plant them.

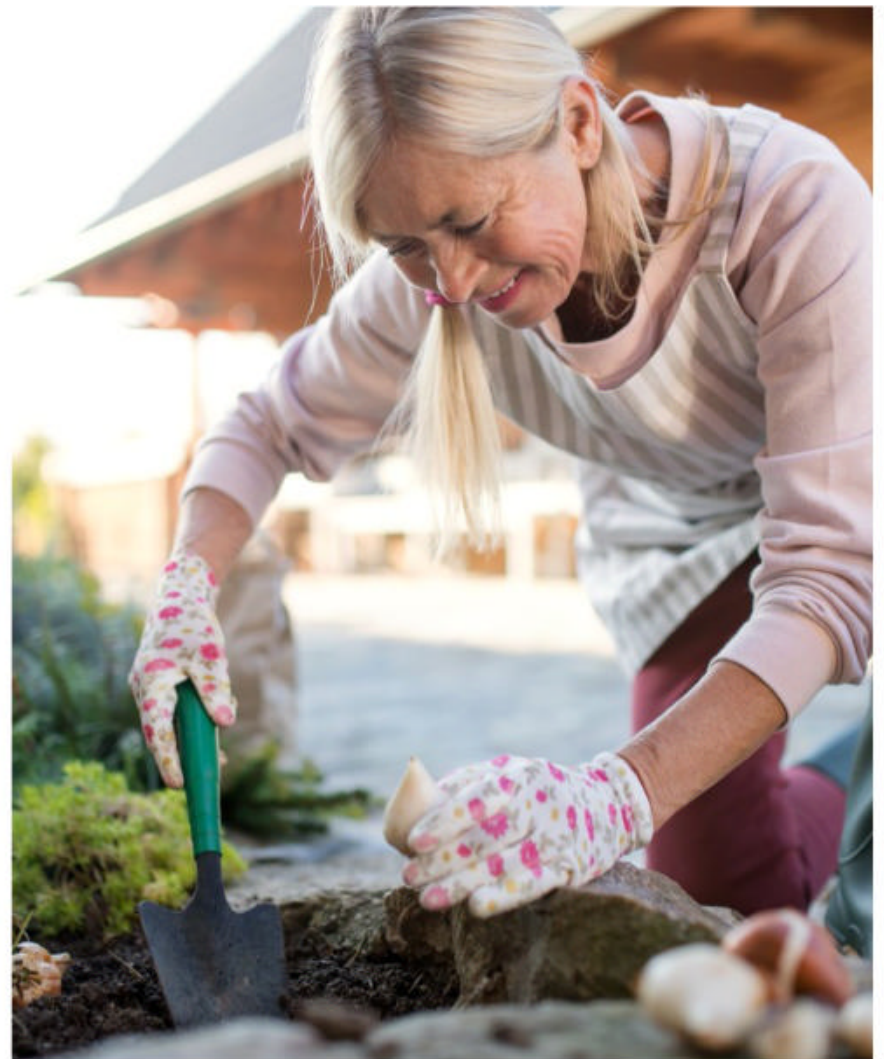
Planting options

When it comes to planting bulbs, space and cost are crucial considerations. With regards to the former, the number of bulbs and the way in which you plant them will be dictated by the land you have available to you. If you have a lawn or garden, then planting your bulbs directly into the ground can make for a beautiful carpet of colour come spring. Alternatively, if you have limited space, such as a balcony or a small patio – or you want the flexibility of changing locations – you can plant bulbs in pots for a movable display that you can protect from the elements.

Why not try... LASAGNE PLANTING

This fun method, known as Dutch bulb lasagne, may not produce a delicious Italian pasta dish, but it does make for a beautiful, dense display of flowers that will last through the seasons. The first thing to do is prepare your pot as before with some crocks and a layer of soil. The bulbs need to be layered with the latest-flowering and the largest going in at the bottom. Then add a layer of potting compost. Continue until the earliest-flowering and smaller bulbs are on the top.

For your first attempt at this method, you could try a triple layer using tulips, narcissus and crocus, or two layers with tulips and hyacinths. Planting this way is all about spacing. The bulbs will need to be planted slightly further apart than if you are doing just a single layer – approximately 5cm (2in) apart with a depth of around 30cm (12in) for the first layer. Once everything is in place a final flourish of compost is added to the top. Water and place in a bright spot.



Step-by-step ... DIRECT PLANTING

1 The first thing to ascertain when planting in the ground is the type of soil you have in your garden. If you have well-drained soil then you are on to a winner, but if your soil is heavy then you will need to plant bulbs that thrive in moist conditions like *Galanthus* (snowdrops) and *Fritillaria meleagris*. There are also ways to improve your soil drainage. Adding some sand or grit at the bottom of the hole before planting will help to improve drainage, as will tipping in some well-rotted manure or garden compost.

2 Once you have selected your desired spot, dig a hole using either a bulb planter or a trowel. Check the depth your bulb requires on the back of the packet (see Tip below) and make sure you dig a hole with sufficient width. With the pointed end of the bulbs facing upwards, place them in the hole, being careful not to put them too close together. Twice the width of the bulb is usually sufficient, but check the packet for tubers and corms as their planting needs can be varied.

TIP: Be sure to follow the instructions on the bulb's packaging. The depth is crucial: if you plant bulbs too close to the surface, they may become a feast for garden critters. But plant too deep and you might miss out altogether as nothing emerges when the time is right, or you might only get foliage and no flowers.

3 Fill the hole back up with soil. If you're planting in the spring, give the spot a good water and leave a marker so that you know where you have planted. If you are planting your autumn bulbs and the soil is moist you won't need to water afterwards – the British weather will do that for you.

Step-by-step... CONTAINER PLANTING

1 Prepare your chosen pots, making sure they are clean inside and giving them a brush out if not. Pop some crocks (shards of pottery, old bits of pot or pebbles) at the bottom of the pot to allow for drainage and to prevent the holes from getting clogged up with earth and waterlogged. Pots will need one or more holes in the bottom. Fill your pot with approximately 10cm (4in) of peat-free multi-purpose compost.

2 Now it's time to add your bulbs. Making sure they are the pointed end up, begin to put them in the pot, giving them each a few centimetres of space. Planting in pots allows you to plant your bulbs closer together, although they shouldn't touch the side of the pot or each other. Once everyone is in place, fill the pot almost to the top with the compost.

3 Give your pots a good water. Don't allow the compost to dry out, particularly during the first few weeks when the roots will be forming and starting to grow. Although bulbs are pretty tolerant of freezing weather and frost, do try to shield them if possible, either by moving them under bushes or covering them with branches to insulate them.



Plant bulbs in decorative pots to enjoy indoors throughout winter



Know your SOILTYPE

The key to a beautiful garden and productive veg plot is maintaining a healthy soil. Use this simple guide to find out how to get the most out of yours

Any experienced gardener will tell you that to grow beautiful, healthy plants you must first take care of the earth beneath your feet. While all soils fulfil a similar function, there are many different types, and knowing which one you have in your garden will help you to choose plants adapted to thrive in your specific conditions. Clay and sandy soils are the most common types; silty soils are less prevalent and are generally found on flood basins near rivers or where rivers have previously existed; and peaty and chalky soils are rare in gardens and exist in just a few

areas of the country. Although there is no 'good' or 'bad' soil, since there are plants adapted to each type, some can be more challenging to cultivate and may not support as many garden plant species.

How to test your soil

As well as looking at your soil, assessing how moist or dry it is, and how easily you can get your spade into it, you can also try the following simple test. First, take a sample of soil from about 10-15cm below the surface – if you have a large plot, take a few samples from different areas. If it is not already damp, add a little water so that it's moist but

not wet. Then feel the texture with your fingers before trying to roll it into a ball.

A soil rich in clay will feel smooth and sticky, and will have a surface sheen like plasticine if you rub it. When rolled into a ball, clay will keep its shape well, and it can be moulded to form a long ribbon. It will also retain a fingerprint mark when you press your thumb on to it.

Sandy soil feels gritty and when you try to roll it into a ball, it will fall apart. Silty soils have a smooth, soapy texture and will make a loose ball shape but will easily fall apart and cannot be moulded into a ribbon like clay. A peaty soil feels spongy and won't roll into a ball – drops of water



Test your soil type to make choosing plants easier

may also come out when you squeeze it. Depending on its exact make up, you may be able to roll loam into a ball and even a ribbon shape if it's a clay loam, but it will not leave a fingerprint mark when pressed. If you



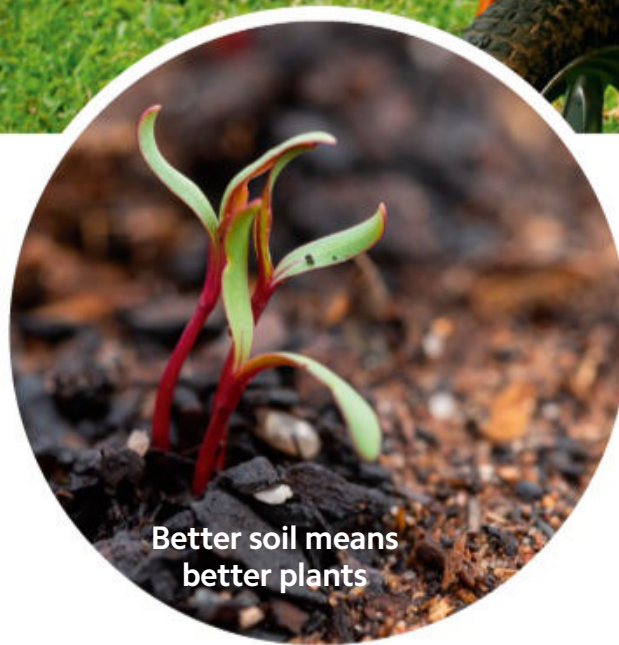
Soil can be improved with organic compost or manure

suspect your soil is chalky, check for the tell-tale signs of white chalk and stony flint in it. You can also add some soil to a jar of vinegar and if it froths, then you know it contains chalk or limestone and will be very alkaline.

Improve your soil

The best advice for any gardener is to choose plants adapted to your site and soil conditions, but we all want what we can't have, so if you have your heart set on a plant that likes good drainage but you have heavy clay, or a rose that prefers a rich soil and you have dry, infertile sand, you can improve your soil to widen your choices. The best way to do this is to add a 5cm layer of well-rotted garden compost or manure (sourced from an organic farm or stable if possible, so that it does not contain herbicides) over the soil surface. This is known as an organic mulch and applying it annually will improve all types of soil.

It contains humus which coats tiny clay and silt particles and binds them together to form a crumb-like texture, rather than solid clods. This increases the spaces between the particles, increasing air flow and drainage, and helping to prevent compaction. Covering clay soils



also prevents them from forming solid crusts in summer. Humus also coats sandy particles, but it acts like a water magnet, allowing them to hold on to moisture long enough for plants to take it up through their roots.

Apply an organic mulch to clay soils in winter, and dry sandy soils in spring, to prevent winter rains washing it away. Leave a gap around the woody stems of shrubs and trees so that the moist mulch will not rot your plants. A mulch laid on the soil surface will be incorporated into the lower depths by worms and other creatures. Here, the organic matter not only improves the structure of the soil, but also continues to decompose, releasing plant nutrients slowly throughout the growing season. Never dig the mulching material into your soil, as this will break up the structure and fine strands of fungi that hold the particles together. Digging also releases polluting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

THE ACID TEST

Soils not only have different textures, they can also be acidic, alkaline or neutral. This is known as the pH value and it's important because some plants dislike acidic soils, while others thrive on them. An easy way to identify an acid soil is to look at your neighbours' gardens to see if they are growing healthy rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, pieris or blue-flowered hydrangeas, which all prefer this type.

For a more accurate assessment, buy a soil pH testing kit from a garden centre. Simply take a small sample of soil from about 15cm below the surface and put in a clean container indoors to dry naturally. Once dry, add some of the soil to the empty test tube, as directed in the instruction leaflet, add a scoop of barium sulphate, which is the white powder that comes with the kit, and top up with the green pH testing solution. Shake well and leave the mixture to settle, then compare the colour of the solution with the chart in the kit to discover your soil's pH value.

Heavy clay

These soils are made up of a large proportion of microscopic clay particles, which can become compacted, binding together tightly to form large, solid, airless clumps. Clay soils retain water and nutrients well, but because they drain poorly, they quickly become waterlogged, and during long dry spells in summer, they may crack and form hard crusts on the surface.

Plants: Astilbe, aster (including *Symphyotrichum*), birch tree, canna lily, clematis, hosta, hydrangea, Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*), mahonia, peony, persicaria, rose, rudbeckia, viburnum.

Veg: Lettuce, chard, green beans, broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cabbage.

A hydrangea is the ideal plant for heavy clay soils



Mediterranean plants like lavender will do well in light and sandy soils



Light and sandy

Sand particles are much larger than clay, and they also have bigger spaces between them that allow water to drain through easily. As a result, sandy soils tend to be dry and relatively infertile, since plant nutrients are suspended in solutions of water and also drain away. Often referred to as 'light' because they are easy to dig, sandy soils also warm up quickly in spring, allowing seeds to germinate and plant growth to begin

sooner than in other soils. The drier conditions, especially in winter, suit many Mediterranean plants such as lavender, rock roses, and olive trees.

Plants: Achillea, agapanthus, spring bulbs, buddleja, rock rose (*Cistus*), coreopsis, delphinium, dianthus, fuchsia, geranium, bay (*Laurus nobilis*), lavender, olive tree (*Olea europaea*), poppy, ornamental grasses.

Veg: Onions, tomatoes, most herbs, root vegetables, such as carrots, parsnips and potatoes.

Chalky soil

This type of soil is only found in a few areas in the UK and if you have chalk, you will see lumps of the soft white stone, as well as hard pieces of flint. Many chalky soils are shallow, lying over a layer of chalk or limestone. They are also free-draining and relatively infertile, although some are deeper and if they also contain a good proportion of clay, they can be water-retentive and contain more

nutrients. Chalk is a very alkaline soil, which means that acid-loving plants such as rhododendrons and camellias will suffer if grown in it. On the plus side, they warm up quickly in spring.

Plants: Artemisia, anemone, buddleja, clematis, geranium, lilac (*Syringa*), lavender, salvia, Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium caeruleum*), thyme, viola.

Veg: Radish, Swiss chard, sweetcorn.

Clematis thrives in alkaline chalk. Avoid acid-loving plants, such as camellias



Silty soil

Silt particles are smaller than sand but larger than clay, and the gaps between them allow good air flow and drainage, while still retaining some water and nutrients. However, the small particles in silty soil can cause it to become compacted, especially if walked on while wet, so avoid this if possible. Silty soils suit a wide range of plants, including any that like moist, free-draining conditions.

Plants: Aster (including *Symphyotrichum*), birch, dogwood (*Cornus*), hellebore, delphinium, lupin, phlox, rose, rudbeckia, Shasta daisy (*Leucanthemum*), sweet box (*Sarcococca*), viburnum, willow (*Salix*).

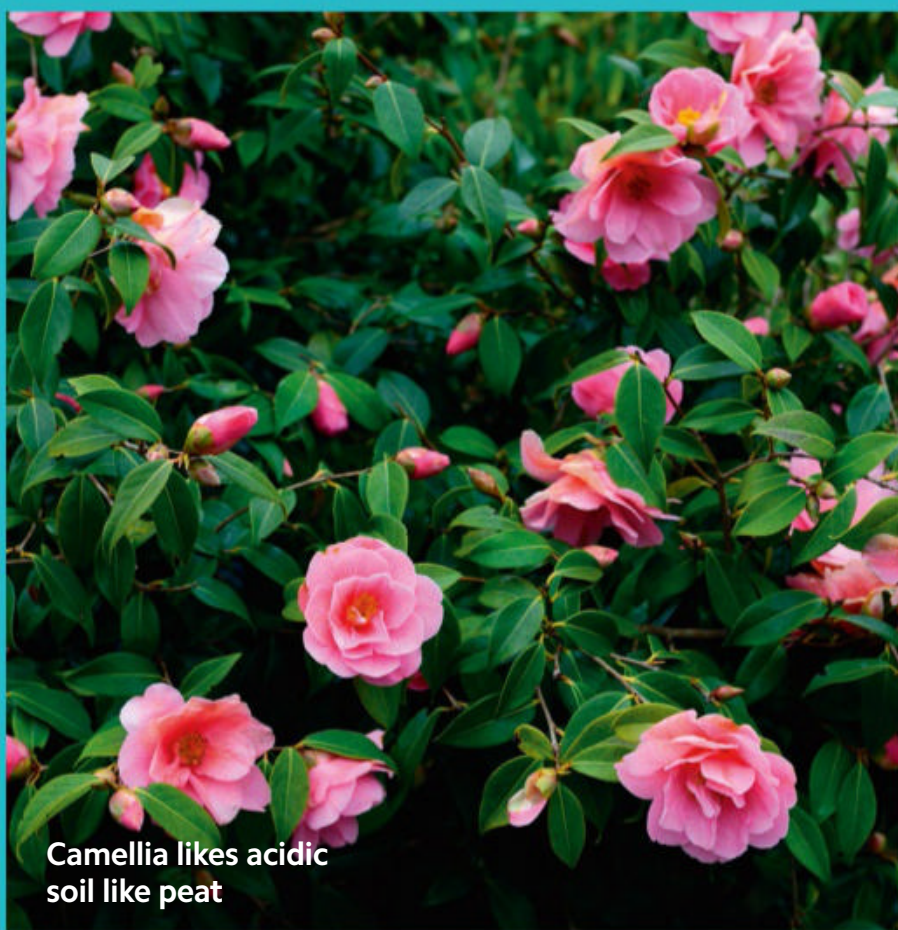
Veg: Broccoli, cabbage, courgette, green beans, kale, lettuce, onion, potatoes, courgette, pumpkin, tomatoes, squash, sweetcorn.



Silty soils suit a wide range of plants and veg

TOP TIP

Protect your soil, particularly those rich in clay or silt, from compaction by never walking across it when it's wet. After rain, lay down wooden boards to walk on. This will help to spread your weight if you need to tend your beds while the soil is still damp.



Camellia likes acidic soil like peat

Peaty soil

Rarely found in gardens in the UK, peaty soils are made up of organic matter, such as decomposed plants. Peat is dark in colour, low in nutrients and water-retentive – it holds on to moisture like a sponge. This type of soil is also very acidic, which means that it will support plants such as rhododendrons, azaleas

and camellias, but will be unsuitable for those that prefer alkaline conditions, including clematis and lavender.

Plants: Rhododendron, azalea, camellia, pieris, blue-flowered hydrangea, heathers, witch hazel (*Hamamelis*).

Veg: For peat soils (if it is not too wet): potatoes, celery, onions, carrots, lettuce.

Loams

Water-retentive, free-draining and fertile, loam soil contains roughly equal proportions of sand and silt, together with enough clay to hold moisture and nutrients, offering gardeners – and plants – the best of all worlds. When improving a soil, it is a loam-like consistency that you are aiming to achieve. Sandy loams have freer drainage, while clay loams hold more water, but all types are suitable for a wide number of

plant species. Only those that are adapted to very free-draining conditions, such as drought-loving Mediterranean herbs, or bog plants that love lots of moisture, such as candelabra primulas and Siberian flag irises (*Iris sibirica*), will turn their noses up at loam.

Plants: Suitable plants are endless, and most vegetable crops will also thrive in loam. You can make a heavy clay or light sandy soil more loam-like by following the tips to improve them.



Wisteria is one of many plants which prefer loam-rich soil



FOOLPROOF *pruning*

There's more to pruning than chopping everything in sight. Our guide tells you all you need to know

In the garden there's nothing like a good autumn tidy up. The urge to rake up leaves, chop back shrubs, prune perennials and shove it all in the compost bin can be irresistible at this time of year. But before you get started be aware that not all plants will benefit.

Exhausted and frosted annuals can certainly go on the compost. With perennials however it varies. Some can be cut back in autumn and others can be left until spring.

Some perennials such as campanulas, phlox, astrantias and alstroemerias are best cut off at soil level. With others there are

definite benefits to holding fire. By not cutting back *Phlomis russeliana*, achilleas, eryngiums, perennial astilbes, sedums, alliums, and many ornamental grasses you can enjoy their structure through the autumn and winter season. Their frosty stems and seedheads add a whole new level of interest to the garden.

There's also another option: cutting back by half or a third. This is the ideal approach for the likes of penstemons and agastaches. If left alone they will rock in winter winds, the roots will be loosened and their chances of survival greatly reduced. Some summer-

flowering shrubs, such as *hydrangea paniculata* have an impressive winter structure and can be left until spring in sheltered places, although thinning is advisable in windy gardens.

Clematis seedheads can be enjoyed into winter, but cut back buddlejas, caryopteris, perovskias and hybrid tea and floribunda roses by half to reduce wind rock. You can then finish the job in spring. When cutting back bear in mind that some seedheads are lovely for drying. Cardoons, nigellas, poppies and grasses are particularly effective when dried.

9 plants to... TRIM BACK

Trim hard



DELPHINIUMS

Cutting back the hollow stems to the ground to prevent slugs hiding inside and eating the crowns. Drop an organic slug pellet or two down the remains of each stem. Do the same with perennial lobelias.

Partially trim



PENSTEMONS

If deadheaded, many will flower into October. But eventually it's wise to cut them back. Reduce by half, leaving some evergreen foliage to protect the crowns while greatly reducing the danger of wind rock.

Wait



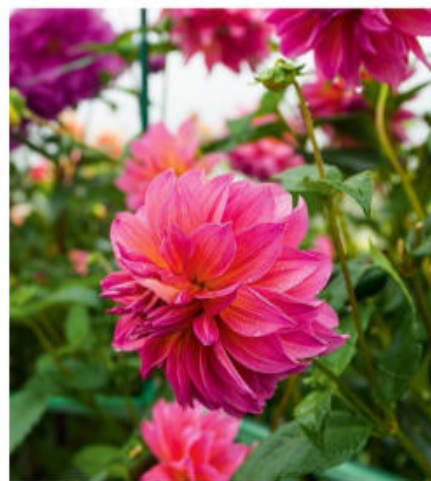
CROCOSMIA

The dried seed capsules of the larger crocosmias, such as 'Emberglow' and 'Lucifer', make a bold winter feature. They can also be cut, dried and sprayed for use in a simple Christmas arrangement.



VERBASCUM

Both verbascum and foxgloves should be cut back hard to prevent self-seeding and to encourage the rosettes of foliage to overwinter. It is from these rosettes that next year's flowering stems will emerge.



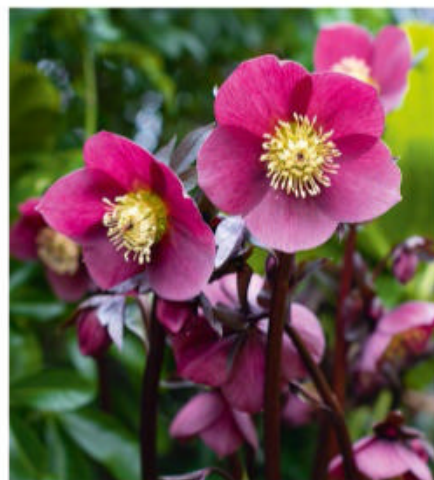
CHRYSANTHEMUMS

Some garden chrysanthemums are less hardy than we'd like, so in general it pays to cut them all back by half after flowering. This will reduce wind rock but still provide greater protection for the overwintering crowns.



GRASSES

Many grasses – miscanthus varieties, in particular, as well as some pampas – hang on to their seedheads well into the winter. Leave these until they become ragged, then you can cut back without damaging new growth.



HELLEBORES

Back spot disease overwinters on the leaves of lenten roses, infecting new flowers. To be safe, cut off the foliage in October. Leave any pretty marbled leaves, but if black spot appears, remove them.



ROSES

Cut back hybrid teas and floribundas by about a third to reduce wind rock – major pruning can wait until March. Remove the old flowering wood from ramblers and leave room for new spring growth.



POPPIES

The heads of perennial poppies are probably long gone, but leave annual poppy heads for their decorative effect and for feeding birds. Dry some seed to sow next year too.

Leave some for wildlife

For many forms of wildlife, the plants we might be tempted to cut back offer valuable sources of food and shelter in winter. Beneficial insects hibernate in stems and in dried seedheads. In spring the twiggy pieces will be used for birds' nests.

Finches in particular will love seedheads of sunflowers, scabious and teasels.

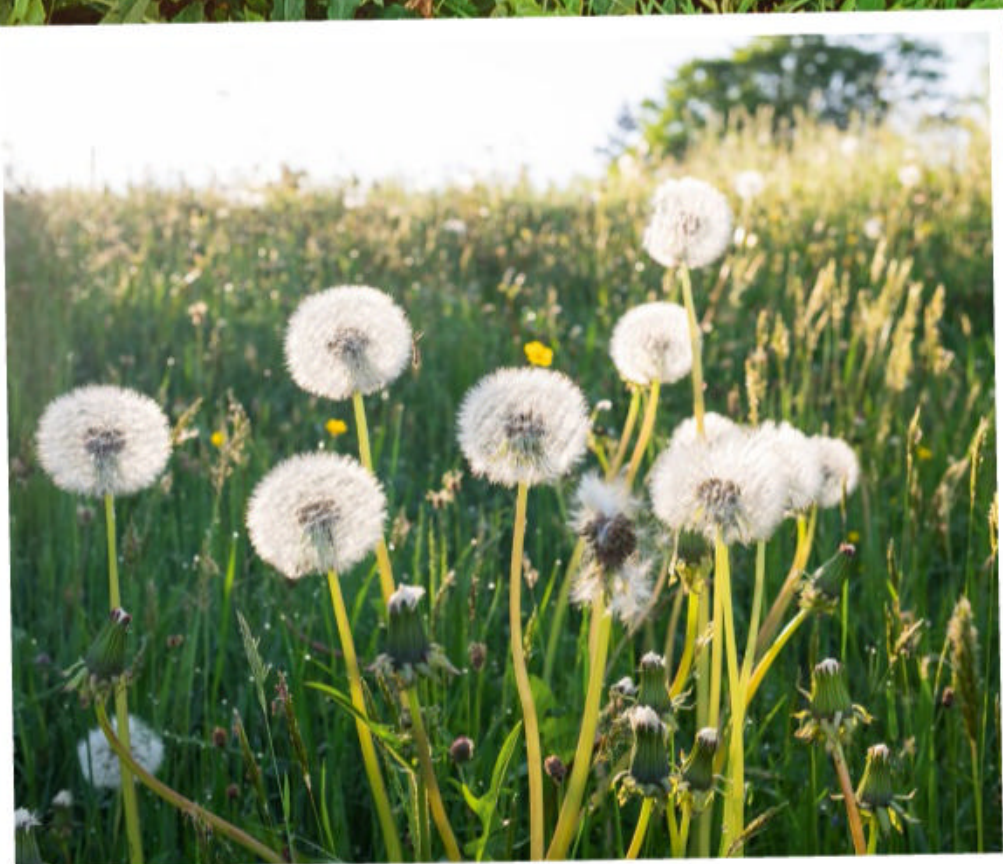
Leave some seedheads and berries for wildlife to feast on



Keep weeds out
of your compost
heap; dispose of
them with your
garden waste

Tackling WEEDS

We show you how to get rid of these invaders, and stop them spreading and taking over your flower beds



There are all manner of weeds lurking in our gardens and sowing seed wherever they get the chance. The general consensus is that they're a pain – especially when they're encroaching on our prized flowers or vegetables and sapping the nutrients from the soil. In the case of some (Japanese knotweed, poison ivy and stinging nettles – we're looking at you) they can also do more harm than simply spoiling

the look of a border. Everyone knows about the nasty allergic reactions that occur from a run-in with nettles or poison ivy, while knotweed can tear through structural foundations at breakneck speed.

Naturally, none are ideal. Luckily, there are a good few methods to zap these plants from our plots and restore order. And, most approaches don't require reaching for the bottle of chemicals, either. We've rounded up lots of tips on how to get rid



Give soil A MULCHING

One of the easiest ways to suppress weeds is to add a layer of mulch to the soil. Biodegradable mulches, such as compost, wood chippings, bark, leafmould, straw, seaweed and rotted manure all

suppress weeds while releasing essential nutrients back into the soil, helping your plants to flourish. Since a mulch breaks down over time it will need to be replaced every few years. A pebble mulch (above) creates an attractive Mediterranean-style garden.

of weeds and stop them spreading. Your plot will be free of them before you know it.

Sprinkle vinegar

The active ingredient in vinegar, acetic acid, is also very effective at destroying weeds. Your standard brown fish-and-chips vinegar will go a decent way to helping with your problem. Simply pour into a spray bottle and spritz onto the desired plants. If you want something that packs a bit more punch,

there are also horticultural vinegars available, which usually have a higher concentration of acetic acid and, as a result, are more effective. However, they also require handling with greater care as they are corrosive and can burn the skin, damage eyes

and erode the surface of your tools.

Mow more

Battling with a weedy lawn? Frequent mowing is a good way to deter them. It weakens the plants and stops them from setting seed, which can eventually get rid of them altogether. Just make sure you attach a basket to your mower, rather than leaving the clippings on the grass. The latter method can spread the seeds around,

escalating the problem. Once your lawn is weed-free, you can remove the basket and leave the clippings on the ground, which will act as a natural fertilizer.

Add boiling water

Pouring boiling water on the base of weeds causes instant shock and will not only kill the plant but also any seeds that may be dormant in the soil. It's a brilliant solution for walkways, paths and driveways, as the weeds will die within a



couple of days. However, it is not recommended for use on lawns or in borders with other plants as it can cause fatal damage to these too.

Dig them up by their roots

True, it's a little old fashioned, but it's certainly stood the test of time. Digging up weeds is one of those trusty, all-natural methods that, when done properly, works wonders. Use a garden fork or a hand trowel, and gently lever them out of the soil, aiming to remove all of the root system to prevent rapid regrowth. If you have lots of weeds you might want to invest in a weed-pulling tool.

Use baking soda

Since bicarbonate of soda (or baking soda) is a powder, you'll need to wet the plant in order to make it stick. Sprinkle one teaspoon over the weed's leaves and let it work its magic. This is a great method if you want to target specific weeds that have popped up among your prized flowers or plants that you don't want to harm. Reapply in four to six weeks if the weeds have not disappeared. Also, try sprinkling bicarbonate of soda between cracks in pathways and patios to stop weeds appearing here in the first place.

Add a lining

The easiest way to deal with weeds is to prevent them from cropping up in the first place. Lining your patios, driveways or paths with a weed-proof membrane before adding gravel, slate or bark chippings will help to keep them at bay.

For your beds, garden centres and DIY stores often sell specific lining sheets (it is sometimes called landscape fabric), which will also retain moisture and reduce the need for watering. Alternatively, if you have old carpet tiles or a shower curtain, these are a great DIY solution and are a good way to recycle unwanted household items.

Proper disposal

Whichever method you use to get rid of weeds, it's crucial that you dispose of them properly. Collect them all in a work cart, small wheelbarrow or strong garden tub to make it easier to transport them for disposal. Don't add them to your compost as any seeds will germinate here. Instead, throw them out with your other green waste. It's also worth remembering that Japanese knotweed is classed as 'controlled waste' in many regions, so professionals must be used to take it away.



Top tip

Be vigilant when pulling up roots as any pieces remaining may resprout. Try digging up what you can and cover the soil with black polythene and leave for a couple of seasons.

Use vinegar, boiling water or bicarbonate of soda on weeds in the gaps between paving stones





Sprinkle a little bicarbonate of soda over dampened weed leaves for an eco-friendly solution

3 of the most common... TROUBLESOME WEEDS



BINDWEED

This troublemaker produces thread-like vines that wrap tightly around other plants, and eventually strangles them.

With its trumpet-shaped flowers, bindweed is easy to spot and, soon after the first flush of blooms, it will take over and ruin your flower beds. Start by pulling away the top growth, excavating as much of the roots as you can. Eventually, the roots will exhaust themselves trying to make more shoots. If you're digging downwards to try and remove the roots, go deeper than you might expect. Getting rid of bindweed takes patience, willpower and several attempts to pull it up, as any root left behind in the soil will sprout again.



NETTLES

As a valuable food source for the caterpillars of a number of butterflies, including red admiral and tortoiseshell, you may wish to keep a clump of nettles in an unobtrusive corner. However, if they are swamping your garden, with the danger of causing a nasty sting there are ways to tackle them. The RHS advises preventing seeds from setting by cutting down plants in mid-summer or earlier. You can also dig out clumps or those that have grown in light soils any time of year. Nettles also cannot withstand repeated mowing.

If you want to use weedkiller, opt for a glyphosate-based variety and spray over the plants in June, before they flower.



JAPANESE KNOTWEED

It's no secret that Japanese knotweed is one of the trickiest weeds. It grows incredibly fast – up to 10cm a day in the summer. And it shows little mercy on its surroundings, hurtling through pipes and structural foundations wherever it gets the chance. It's no surprise that for many regions around the world, you legally have to declare its presence if selling your property. Trying to remove it yourself is no easy task – it can take years to combat it with commercial weedkiller. Even then, you can only take the waste to licensed tips. Dumping it in the countryside is a big no-no. The best way to get rid of this weed is to call in a professional.

Fertiliser FOR FREE

Try these simple and cheap methods and learn how to nourish your plants on a budget

Making your own fertiliser is a great way to give your plants a boost without splashing the cash on expensive shop-bought products. And there are a good few ways to go about it that are both simple and effective.

So, if you're a fan of cheap garden ideas, having these tips and tricks up your sleeve is well worth it. What's more, whether you're whipping up batches of comfrey tea or putting spent coffee grounds to good use, homemade fertilisers are often a great way to be more eco-friendly.

Comfrey

'Comfrey is rich in potassium and also contains nitrogen and vitamin B12, which give plants a boost,' say the experts at *Amateur Gardening*. Grow a patch in your plot and you can make liquid fertiliser from it. Try sowing *Symphytum x uplandicum* 'Bocking 14' – a sterile variety that won't self-seed everywhere, unlike the prolific, common comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*). Just remember to wear gloves and long sleeves when handling comfrey – its hairy leaves can cause an allergic reaction.

How to make comfrey tea

1 Remove the leaves of your comfrey and soak them in a large container filled with water. The ideal ratio is 1kg cut leaves to 15ltr water.

2 Weigh down the leaves with something heavy – a brick or two would be ideal.

3 After four to six weeks you will be left with a foul-smelling but very useful liquid fertiliser. Strain off the sludge at the bottom of the container and add it to the compost heap, and use the undiluted liquid as a feed.

4 The *Amateur Gardening* experts advise storing homemade liquid feeds somewhere cool and dry where they should keep for up to a year, after which they may lose potency. 'They won't harm plants, but will be less effective – you can always pour them onto the compost heap so nothing is wasted.'

Speaking of composting, even adding unsoaked leaves will give yours a boost, as *Amateur Gardening* expert John Negus explains. 'You can layer comfrey leaves through your compost heap and leaf-mould piles to add nutrients and encourage bacterial activity, meaning your heap will compost quicker,' he says.



Comfrey is rich in potassium and nitrogen

And that's not all. You can also 'layer the leaves at the bottom of a planting trench when growing beans and other hungry vegetables, or chop them up and mix them with grass clippings to use as a mulch around plants.'



Nettle tea is ideal for feeding leafy green crops



Apply well-rotted manure to your beds and borders and watch them bloom

Nettles

You can also use nettles to make a liquid plant feed. This is a particularly handy free garden tip if you have some of these weeds growing rampant, as it puts them to good use.

The process is similar to making comfrey tea: pack a large drum or bucket with stems, cover with water (preferably rainwater), and leave for about a month, stirring several times a week. It smells revolting, but is good stuff!

Nettles have a high nitrogen content, so are great for feeding leafy greens, such as kale, chard and spinach. You can also mix them with comfrey to create a balanced liquid feed. It's useful for supporting flowering and fruiting (and heavy feeders, such as tomatoes and spinach, love it). But, it is not

recommended for use when growing roses, because its high iron level tends to adversely affect the shrubs' metabolism.

When you go to use it, dilute it from the raw mix – a ratio of one part nettle tea to 10 parts water is about right. Ensure that the soil is damp before applying it, to avoid cell damage.

'Start liquid feeding in early summer, and with fruiting and flowering annuals and perennials carry on all summer,' say the *Amateur Gardening* experts. 'Use diluted liquid feeds every week, though on new plants every fortnight should be sufficient. Don't feed woody plants after mid-summer as new growth may be damaged by colder weather.'

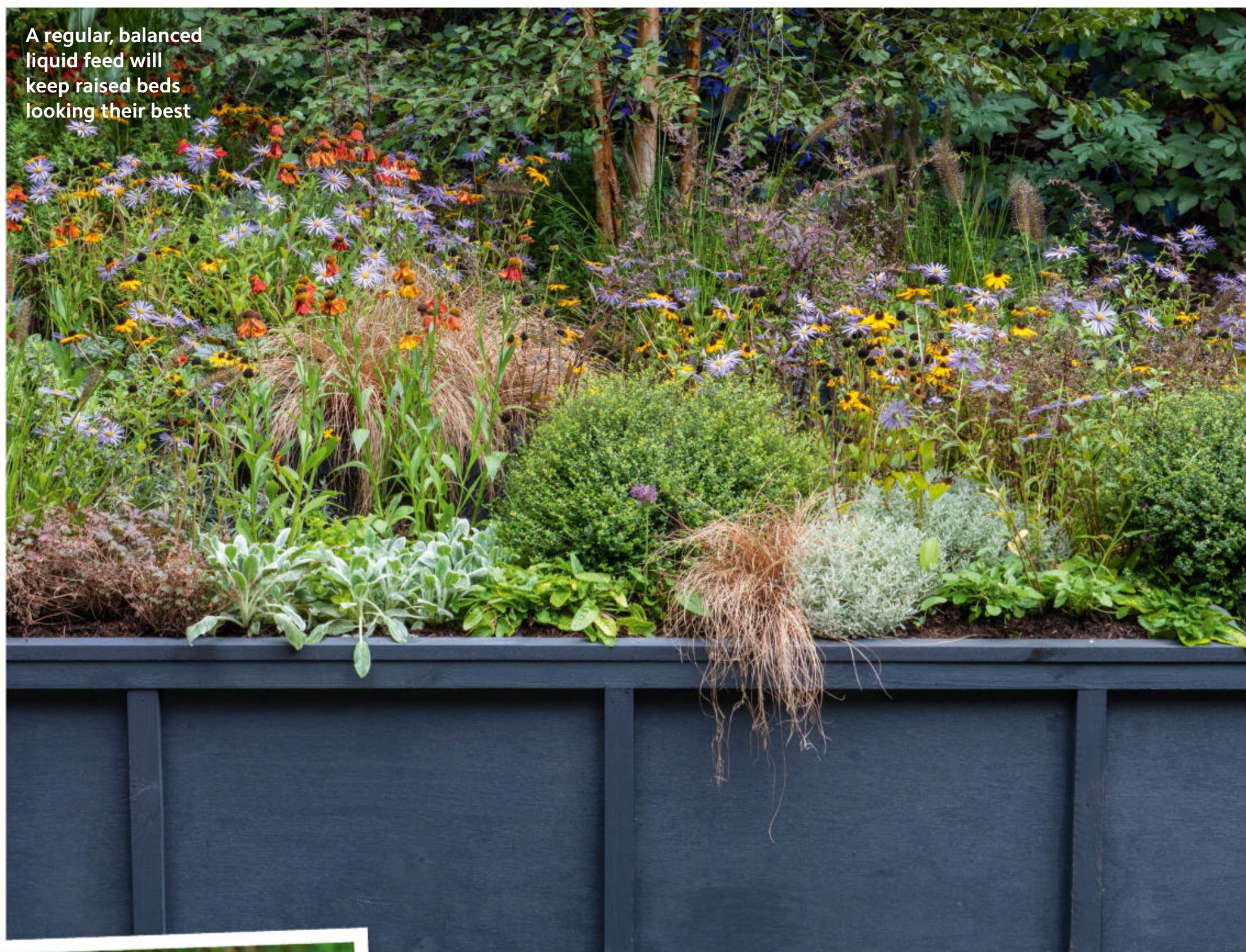
As well as adding nettle tea to plants, you can also put it on your compost heap to speed up the decomposition process.

Manure

In rural areas, manure can often be acquired for free from stables and farms. It has lots of nutrients and, added to soil, it increases helpful bacteria, encourages worms and other beneficial creatures, and helps retain moisture. The RHS explains how it should ideally be used in a well-rotted state. Fresh or partially rotted manure will not look as dark or as uniform in texture and colour.

If you want to use fresh manure, the RHS says to apply at half the usual rate and not on ground used for crops that will be eaten raw, such as salad leaves. However, it is liable to have a high level of ammonia which might, if close enough, scorch leaves or roots. It's better to wait a few months (stack it up and cover it with a rainproof sheet) until it turns crumbly and black and its ammonia smell has dissipated.

A regular, balanced liquid feed will keep raised beds looking their best



Buckwheat and phacelia are fast-growing green manures

Green manure

Green manures are fast-growing plants that are used to cover bare patches of soil, often in raised garden beds. Examples include buckwheat, crimson clover and trefoil, the seeds of which are very affordable. Normally sown in late summer, they soak up and store nutrients from the ground, much of which would otherwise be washed away by winter rain.

In spring, you simply dig the plants into the soil. Here, they will decompose and be fed on by worms, thus returning the nutrients back into the earth. It's not enough to cut the green manure back and allow it to rot down by itself – worms can only 'eat' so much and a great deal of the crop will be left on the surface.

Coffee grounds

Coffee grounds are a useful source of organic matter and nutrients. It is thought that they are particularly beneficial to acid-loving plants, such as tomatoes, roses, azaleas, blueberries, evergreens, camellias, avocados and some fruit trees. However, avoid using them around seedlings and young plants, particularly those with

shallow roots, such as lettuce and radish. There are a couple of ways to apply coffee to your garden. One method is to add a thin layer of fresh grounds to your soil, then rake it in to prevent the grounds from becoming mouldy and developing a crust.

You can also use coffee to make a liquid fertiliser. Mix 250g damp grounds in a 20ltr bucket of water and let it sit outdoors to get to air temperature. The resulting feed can then be bottled and stored – dilute it before use so it has the appearance of weak tea.

To get the most benefits, apply fertiliser made with coffee grounds to your garden in spring. If you're storing the grounds until then, put them in an airtight container to retain as many nutrients as possible – they will degrade over time, as all fertilisers do when exposed to air.

They have other uses, too. Coffee grounds are a great ingredient for the compost heap and they also discourage slugs and snails when used as mulch around vulnerable plants, such as hostas.

What's more, they are useful at lightening the structure of heavy soils and encouraging earthworms, which are helpful for aeration.



FERTILISER FOR FREE

Wood ash

Invested in a firepit? The ash that's left over after you've enjoyed the cosy glow from the flames can be used for feeding some of your plants.

Ash contains 2-6% potash, which encourages flowering and resistance to disease. It also has small amounts of phosphate, iron, magnesium and manganese. To use, simply scatter onto the soil at a rate of 60g per square metre.

It will quickly raise the pH of the soil, so should only be applied once a year. 'For this reason, it should not be used at all around acid-loving plants, such as azaleas, rhododendrons and blueberries,' warn the *Amateur Gardening* experts. 'Because of its calcium content, you can sprinkle it around clematis, helianthemums, verbascums and other plants that thrive in chalky soil.'

It's best applied in spring. If you want to store your wood ash to use at a later date, make sure that you keep it under cover so that its nutrients aren't leached out by rain.

Wood ash isn't just good for fertilising some plants – it can also help deter slugs and snails, and lighten heavy clay soil types.

Sprinkle wood ash just once a year, ideally in spring



Brassicas are hungry plants that benefit from nitrogen-rich fertilisers

3 of the best... INSTANT FERTILISERS

EPSOM SALTS

Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate) are good for encouraging roses, houseplants, tomatoes and other greenhouse crops to develop bright green and healthy leaves. Add 10g to 5ltr water and use it to water your plants two or three times throughout the spring.

SOLUBLE ASPIRIN

Some reports suggest that diluted soluble aspirin aids plants, especially if they are stressed, which in turn may help to increase growth and yields. Diluted aspirin can also help seeds to germinate and cuttings to root. Take care when spraying aspirin solution not to harm bees and other insects.

URINE

It may sound strange, but human urine makes a good plant fertiliser. *Amateur Gardening* expert John Negus says, 'It contains nitrogen, potassium and phosphorous. Ideally, store it in a lidded bucket outdoors and dilute a cup of it with 3-5ltr water. Never use it neat as it can burn roots and shoots.'

A close-up photograph of a purple Buddleja flower spike. A bumblebee is on the right side of the spike, and a tortoiseshell butterfly is on the left side. The background is blurred green foliage.

50 easy plants for **FUSS-FREE GARDENING**

Hectic lifestyle? Low-maintenance plants are a simple solution, leaving more time to relax in your beautiful plot



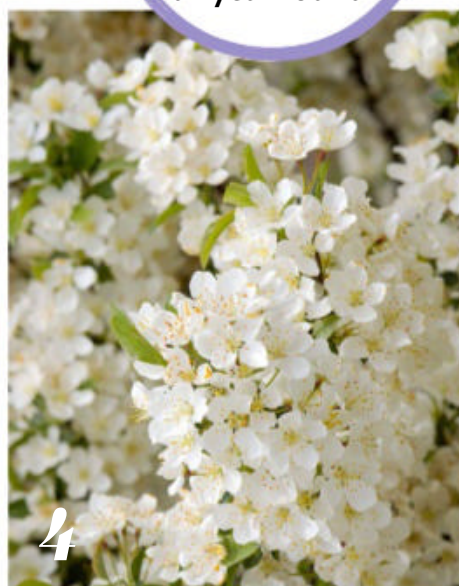
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Top tip

Aim to grow
bee-friendly plants
all year round



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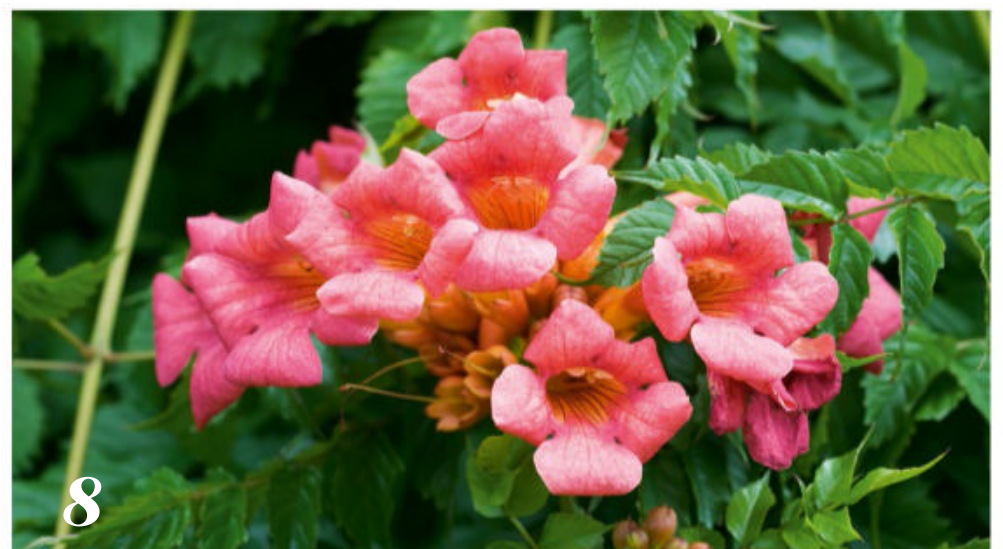
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WILDLIFE-FRIENDLY

Plants packed with pollen and nectar help the declining numbers of bees, butterflies and other pollinators

1 BUDDLEJA

Buddleja davidii 'Sugar Plum' is a new undemanding shrub bearing deep pinkish-red flowers on a low-growing plant that is attractive to a wide range of butterflies and bees. Remove faded flowers to encourage more. Plant in sun or partial shade. **H3m**

2 HELLEBORE

Hellebore species and hybrids are a welcome source of food for bees early in the year. Grow

in shade and add lots of organic matter when planting. Trim the away the old leaves in winter before the new flowers appear. **H50cm**

3 PHACELIA TANACETIFOLIA

Not just for the bees, phacelia attracts many other beneficial insects such as lacewings and ladybirds. The faded stems can be dug in to improve your soil. Sow seed March to June in a sunny, well-drained patch. **H45cm**

4 MALUS SARGENTII 'TINA'

The blossom of this white-flowering crab apple is adored by bees, and birds devour the red fruit in autumn. A lovely slow-growing dwarf variety for borders or containers, in sun or partial shade. **H2m**

CLIMBERS

Climbers transform vertical spaces and stand-alone structures. Take care to match a plant's vigour to its support

5 ROSA SCARBOROUGH FAIR

This pretty, bushy shrub rose has clusters of cup-shaped pink blooms with a musky scent. It has good resistance to black spot. Tough and reliable. **H1m**

6 COBAEA SCANDENS

An ideal gap-filler and happy in a shady spot, the cup-and-saucer vine is a quick-growing

annual that will romp against a wall or metal arch. Sow seeds in May or buy plugs. **H3m**

7 CLEMATIS UROPHYLLA 'WINTER BEAUTY'

Small, waxy bell flowers stand out against evergreen foliage from December to February. Plant in free-draining soil in a sunny, sheltered spot. **H3m**

8 CAMPSIS RADICANS

The trumpet vine will provide fast cover against a sunny arbour or pergola. It is drought tolerant and has a self-clinging habit, prune in late winter. **H8-12m**

PERENNIALS

Perennials needn't be labour intensive. Always follow 'right plant, right place' principles for best results

9 IRIS 'SUPERSTITION'

Bearded irises are a must-have for the cottage-border look, with elegant flowers that appear in May. Plant in full sun where the rhizome is not shaded by other plants. **H90cm**

10 ANEMONE X HYBRIDA

Japanese anemones are an undemanding perennial flowering reliably in late summer, with blooms in pink shades or white. Not fussy about situation. **H1.5m**

11 AGAPANTHUS 'NORTHERN STAR'

This deciduous variety is the hardiest, a real trooper, with large deep-blue heads appearing on tall stems. For the best flowers, plant in full sun. **H60cm**

12 GEUM 'TOTALLY TANGERINE'

Masses of flowers on tall stems are produced for a long period from late spring to autumn. Performs best in a sunny spot in well-drained soil. **H90cm**

13 GERANIUM 'BALLERINA'

A dwarf variety forming mounds of silvery foliage and small, pink-veined flowers that keep coming in summer. Grow in pots or well-drained soil in sun or partial shade. **H15cm**

14 VERBASCUM CHAIXII 'ALBUM'

Short-lived these may be, but verbascums are worthy garden plants for their tall spikes over a long period. Ideal for a sunny spot in free-draining soil. **H1.5m**



9



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Top tip

Choose perennials that don't need staking, such as verbascums



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16

SUNNY SPRAWLERS

For low-maintenance borders, use long-lived ground-cover plants and combine in drifts of the same variety

15 BERGENIA

Commonly called elephant's ears, this tough ground-cover plant tolerates exposed spots, but does best in moist, well-drained soil. Spikes of magenta, pink or white flowers appear in spring. **H&S: 1x1m**

16 EUPHORBIA MYRSINITES

Blue spurge is a drought-tolerant evergreen, which has interesting silver succulent stems that hug the ground, tipped with lime-green flowers in spring. Wear gloves when handling as the sap causes irritation. **H&S: 10x50cm**

FUSS-FREE PLANTS

SHADE LOVERS

A rich mixture of foliage shapes, colour and texture creates a tapestry effect in shady corners

24 PULMONARIA

Lungwort is a versatile evergreen perennial with spotted, stripy or silver leaves, and red, pink or white flowers from late winter to late spring. **H&S: 60cmx1.2m**

25 PACHYSANDRA TERMINALIS

This evergreen makes a great ground cover. White flowers appear above glossy leaves in summer. All except very dry soils. **H&S: 50cmx1m**

26 EPIMEDIUM X PERRALCHICUM 'FRÖHNLEITEN'

A useful ground-cover plant for a partially shaded spot, with pretty yellow flowers in spring that lighten a dull corner. The attractive, heart-shaped leaves occasionally remain evergreen. **H&S: 40x60cm**

27 MAHONIA AQUIFOLIUM 'APOLLO'

An excellent shrub with yellow, sweetly scented flowers that will fill an enclosed part of the garden in winter. This variety is well behaved and won't grow too tall. **H&S: 1x1.5m**



Top tip

If soil is poorly drained, add plenty of horticultural grit



DAMP DWELLERS

If your soil is permanently damp there are numerous interesting perennials that will thrive in these conditions

20 CANDELABRA PRIMULA

These plants relish damp conditions, thriving in full sun, the tall stems carry whorls of flowers in bright jewel colours in early summer. **H1m**

21 ASTILBE

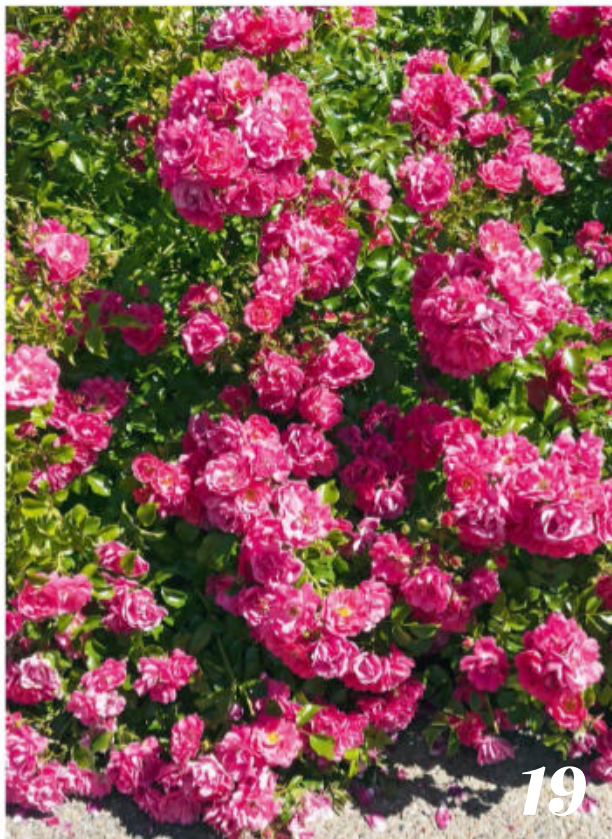
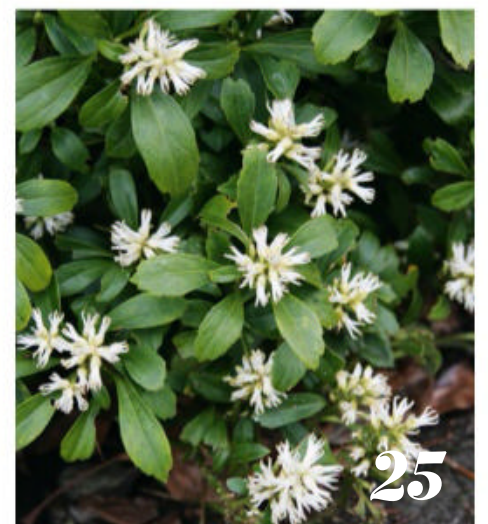
A must-have for a damp spot, astilbes throw up plumes of tiny flowers that come in vibrant or pastel colours. A reliable perennial for a semi-shaded spot. **H30cm**

22 HOSTA 'JUNE'

The understory beneath trees and shrubs is perfect for hostas. Look for varieties listed as 'slug resistant', such as this one. The variegated heart-shaped leaves stand out in borders. **H50cm**

23 LIGULARIA PRZEWALSKII

Appropriately named golden ray due to its tall spires of yellow flowerheads in July and August, this perennial is the answer if your soil is permanently wet or squelchy. Prefers sun or semi-shade. **H2.5m**



17 NEPETA

A ground-covering plant with pretty blue flowers and grey foliage that prefers free-draining soil. Shear back after flowering. **H&S: 1mx45cm**

18 EUONYMUS

Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald Gaiety' is an evergreen shrub offering mats of weed-proof cover. Look out for gold-leaved 'Emerald 'n' Gold'. **H&S: 1x1.5m**

19 ROSA FLOWER CARPET

A striking, low-growing rose that is long-flowering and resilient. Perfect for slopes and banks. **H&S: 60x90cm**



28

Top tip

Plant shrubs with colourful or boldly shaped leaves



30



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SHRUBS

Shrubs add presence, and most are evergreen and tough enough to look after themselves

28 CHOISYA X DEWITTEANA 'AZTEC PEARL'

A bushy evergreen that comes into its own in early summer, when pretty fragrant flowers appear. Drought tolerant, it thrives in full sun. **H2.5m**

29 FATSIA JAPONICA

An architectural shrub with large, shiny palmate leaves that reflect light in dark spaces. Likes partial or full shade. **H3m**

30 HEBE 'HEARTBREAKER'

A bushy evergreen that is slow growing and needs no pruning. Grey-green and cream leaves turn a striking red in winter. Needs a sheltered spot. **H1m**



33

31 PITTOSPORUM TENUIFOLIUM 'TOM THUMB'

Ideal as hedging or to punctuate perennials and grasses. New fresh green growth contrasts with purple leaves. **H50cm-1m**

32 NANDINA DOMESTICA

The heavenly bamboo is a handsome plant that won't encroach on its neighbours. White flower sprays precede red berries. Best in sun. **H1.5m**

EDIBLES

Choose veg plants that are perennial and easy to care for

33 REDCURRANT 'RED LAKE'

One bush is all you need for a good harvest. This reliable variety has large berries in July. **H1.5m**

34 KALE 'REDBOR'

Vigorous and versatile, harvest at baby leaf stage or allow to mature for winter pickings. Sow from March to July. **H1.2m**

35 ALPINE STRAWBERRY

Grow as ground cover along paths and pick the small tasty fruits as you pass. **H15cm**

36 FRENCH BEAN 'PURPLE TEEPEE'

These dwarf beans won't need staking. Sow March to July at three-week intervals. **H45cm**



38



39

GRASSES

Some grasses prefer light, sandy soils in full sun; others thrive in heavy soils and shade

37 HAKONECHLOA MACRA 'AUREOLA'

Deciduous golden variegated foliage that forms a low mound. Likes sun or partial shade. **H50cm**

38 STIPA GIGANTEA

A must-have evergreen grass that makes a long-standing display in sun and free-draining soil. **H2m**

39 CAREX 'ICE DANCE'

Sedges are robust and easy going. Sun or shade, they are unfussy about soil. **H30cm**

40 MISCANTHUS SINENSIS

Popular varieties include 'Malepartus' (right) and 'Zebrinus'. Sun, free-draining soil. **H2m**

FEATURE WENDY HUMPHRIES PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY, GETTY, FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM, PLANTIPP BY®

FUSS-FREE PLANTS

DROUGHT TOLERANT

Sheltered, sunny corners with free-draining soil lend themselves to plants that thrive in hot, dry conditions

46 LAVENDER

Grow sun-loving lavender in threes or as an informal hedge. Once established, additional watering is unnecessary. Trim in September. **H1m**

47 CISTUS 'SILVER PINK'

A good choice for difficult, dry spots and guaranteed to flower for months. Problem-free, they do best in full sun. **H1m**

48 YUCCA GLORIOSA 'VARIEGATA'

This is a sculptural evergreen with stiff cream and gold leaves, that produces a large spike of white bells in summer. **H2m**

49 PHLOMIS FRUTICOSA

In early summer erect shoots with hooded deep yellow flowers in whorls appear up the stem. Leave dried seed heads intact for winter interest. **H1m**

50 ERYNGIUM

Sea holly is a tough, coastal plant that thrives in full sun and free-draining soil. Look out for 'Big Blue' or silvery 'Miss Wilmott's Ghost'. **H75cm**



46



47

CONTAINERS

A few larger pots are easier to manage than lots of small ones

41 SEMPERVIVUM 'SUNSPARKLER DREAM DAZZLER'

A new variety with shocking-pink leaf edges. Make a feature by grouping potted succulents on a table. **H15cm**

42 CAMELLIA

Its spectacular spring flowers and glossy green foliage are hard to beat. If your soil is alkaline, grow in a large pot of ericaceous compost. **H2m**

43 PHORMIUM

A popular architectural plant, New Zealand flax does well in pots. Go for colourful forms, such as 'Black Adder' (below left), or variegated. **H1.5m**

44 BUXUS SEMPERVIRENS

Easy to maintain, box is a useful way to bring formality to a patio or terrace. Buy ready-clipped or create your own topiary shapes if time allows. **H45cm**

45 HEUCHERA

Super-low-maintenance and evergreen, heucheras come in a vast array of leaf colours. Ideal in sun or partial shade. Watch out for vine weevil. **H50cm**



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Top tip

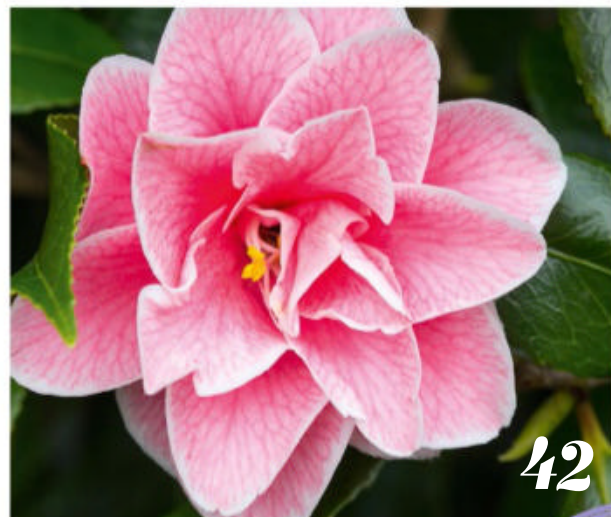
Buy compost that contains water-retaining gel and fertilisers



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Spring tidy up

Q I didn't tidy up the garden in autumn. Can I use the dead leaves I'm sweeping up in the garden now to turn them into compost?

A Garden leaves make great compost, but

they can take longer to decompose than other softer greenery. The best thing to do is to put them in their own compost bin or pile rather than mix them in with the rest of your compost.



ASK THE

EXPERTS



Garden designer Catherine Clancy is here to help you make the best use of your outdoor space and solve your late-winter queries

Lawn care

Q I want to give my lawn a head start for summer. When should I start cutting it and does it need feeding in spring?

A If the winter has been mild and your lawn has continued to grow, then yes, you should be cutting your lawn right now. Feed your lawn with a high-nitrogen feed to kick-start green growth. And consider a spike and scarify treatment – scarifying means raking all the dead 'thatch' from the lawn, letting air and water into the roots. Spiking your lawn can be done with a garden fork or by machine. Scarify and spike before you feed.



Cutting garden

Q It's my dream to have my own flower cutting garden. What should I plant to get lots of flowers in summer?

A Start sowing annual seeds now of cosmos and *Salvia viridis* (above) for summer flowers. Dahlias are great for cutting and will flower late into autumn. Plant perennials such as astrantia, alstroemeria and hardy chrysanthemums for cut flowers year after year.

PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Veg patch

Q I want to start growing my own vegetables as I have quite a big plot that I have decided to use for this. What are the best fool-proof choices to begin with as I haven't any experience growing veg?

A Climbing green beans, runner beans, courgettes, outdoor cucumbers, sweetcorn, chard, salad leaves, rocket and herbs are all very easy to grow. If you have never grown vegetables before, then consider buying small vegetable plugs from a supplier which are much easier than growing from seed when you are starting out.

Summer bulbs

Q I am keen to plant summer bulbs in my garden this year and would love to know which types are easy to grow. But have I left it too late?

A It's not too late to plant summer-flowering bulbs. Varieties such as dahlias, lilies (below), canna, crocosmia, gladioli, eucomis, nerine, anemone and begonias should be planted in April and

May. Dahlias flower right through until October – there is a huge range of colours to choose from and they're easy to grow. They will need staking and deadheading to keep them flowering, plus a sunny position. Unusual looking eucomis are another easy bulb for a shady border. Cannas are a great addition to a tropical border in a sunny spot.



Hydrangea pruning

Q My hydrangeas have plenty of green shoots but lots of dead wood too so they look messy. Is the best thing to cut everything back?

A Yes, cut your hydrangeas back now before they really start growing. *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' can be cut right back to 30cm from ground level, as they will flower on this year's shoots. Mophead hydrangeas will flower on old wood, so just deadhead them, and remove any dead branches,

and maybe a few more to thin out the shrub a bit. *Hydrangea paniculata* are pruned the same time as 'Annabelle'.



Butterfly bush

Q I have a Buddleia (butterfly bush) that's outgrown its space. It's a lovely specimen and I have a new spot in mind for it. But is now a good time to move it?

A The best time to move shrubs is from November to March, while the shrub is dormant. You can however still move it now, if you water the plant

thoroughly beforehand. Dig out a good clump of soil around the roots, soak the new planting hole and plant the shrub back to its original soil depth. Firm the soil around the roots with your boot and water thoroughly. Water the moved shrub once a week, giving it about a bucket full of water each time so that it gets down to the newly planted roots.

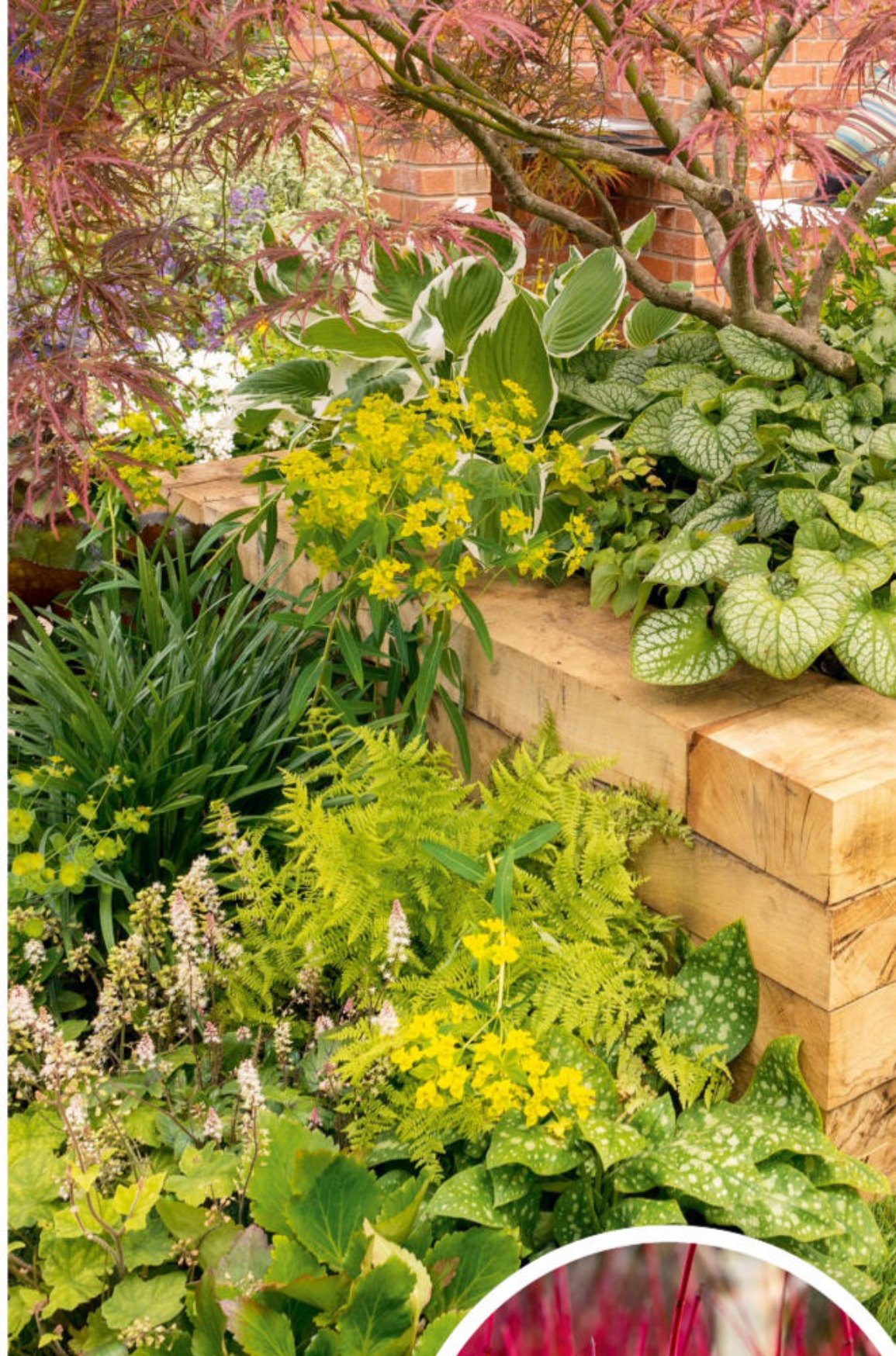


Mulching matters

Q I'd like to make my own mulch for the garden. How can I do this?

A As well as helping to suppress weeds, mulch also keeps the soil warm and will boost its moisture content. I find that a small

garden shredder is perfect for generating good compost and mulching material. Shred all your prunings and add them to your lawn trimmings. This will result in a good mulch that's packed with nutrients.



Garden designer David Andersen answers questions about tidying up in late summer and preparing for the seasons ahead

Moving on

Q I am keen to move an evergreen pittosporum to a new spot as it has outgrown its space. Is now a good time?

A This depends on how mature the shrub is. Moving evergreen shrubs is always tricky and success is not guaranteed. Generally autumn is the best time to do it. Dig up the shrub retaining as much root ball as you can (at least 60cm diameter). Water it well in the following spring and summer until it has settled in and new root growth is established.



Add winter colour

Q Can you recommend easy shrubs for adding winter colour to lift grey days?

A For stem colour, choose red or yellow varieties of cornus, also called dogwood (above). Flower colour can be introduced with winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), which is yellow. Hellebores have many cultivars, including vibrant pinks, and camellias also offer showy pink and red blooms.

WORDS DAVID ANDERSEN, DAVIDANDERSEN.CO.UK
PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Design projects

Q When is the best time of year to carry out my garden redesign work?

A Extreme weather can interfere with your plans. Do masonry and concreting work when it's 2°C-plus to avoid frost damage. Planting isn't possible in frozen ground, and it's best not to plant in midsummer if you're likely to be away, as plants need watering in hot weather, at least for the first growing season.



Extra chips

Q I want to add a layer of ornamental bark chippings to one of my beds. Is autumn a good time to do this?

A Yes, autumn is the best time because the bark chippings will keep the soil warmer as winter develops, and will also inhibit the growth of annual weeds as we head into spring.

Don't miss out

Q What's the absolute latest I can plant bulbs? I'm confused as all the advice seems to vary.

A The right planting time depends on the type of bulb. For spring-flowering bulbs such as daffodils and

crocus the usual advice is by the end of September, so now is definitely the right time. Autumn-flowering bulbs such as nerines should be planted by late summer, while summer-flowerers such as gladioli need to be done in early spring.



Dahlia love

Q I would like to know what I do with dahlias at the end of summer once they have finished flowering. Do I have to lift the tubers and store them over winter in the shed?

A Unless you have very mild winters it's best to protect the tubers over winter. Carefully dig them up and pack them in a box, then cover them with dry compost. Store them in a frost-free place such as a dry shed or greenhouse until you replant them in spring.



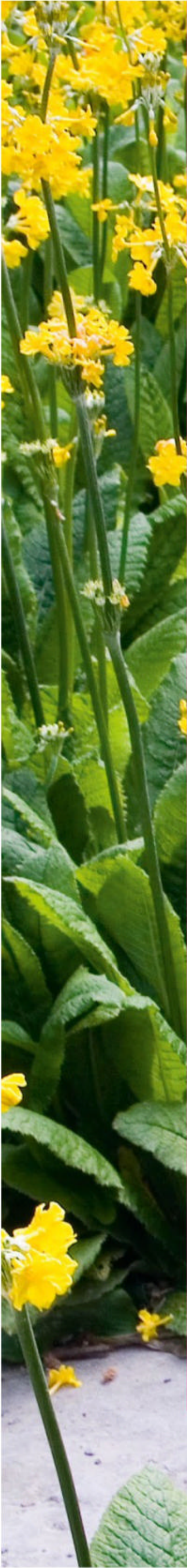
Caring for grasses

Q What should I do with my ornamental grasses so they'll thrive next year?

A Leave grasses alone for the time being and enjoy their seed heads and autumn colours into winter. In January or February, cut

the old stems of deciduous grasses to ground level using good secateurs or, for big mounds, a hedge trimmer. Cutting back will prevent most grasses from developing seeds; if seeds form, the grass may die.





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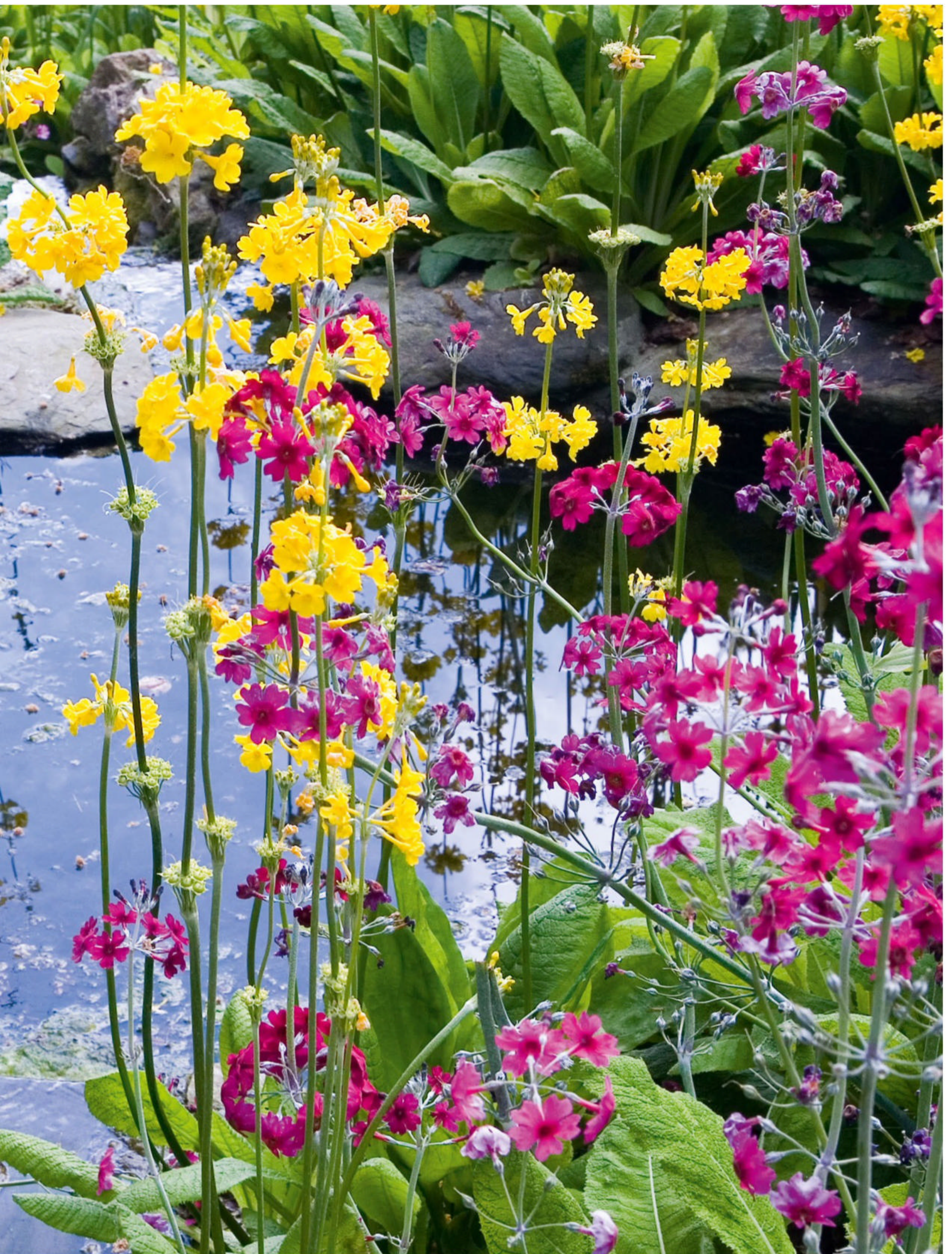
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Your essential guide to

COMPOST

Turn your garden waste into a budget-friendly soil improver and help your plants to flourish and thrive as a result

Composting is an easy and cost-effective way to look after your garden. You can also use a kitchen compost bin to make compost for container plants.

First, you'll need a sturdy lidded compost bin. Choosing the right one is crucial to correct composting. Ideally, you want a bin that's made from metal or wood, not plastic. A garden compost bin should have

ventilation and drainage, and be in contact with the ground, because the soil will activate the composting process. It should have a cover to protect compost from rain, or you'll end up with a mixture that is too wet.

If it's a kitchen composting bin, try to use a metal or ceramic one, and place it away from direct sunlight – under the sink is ideal. Add a layer of garden soil to the bottom of the bin to help the composting process.

Ready or not?

When you've got a good mix leave it for six months, checking now and again. Speed up the process by aerating it again. It's ready when it's dark, crumbly and smells earthy.

5 easy steps... DIY COMPOST



1 CREATE LAYERS
Speed up composting by layering correctly: line the base with straw or twigs, then alternate green and brown (wet and dry) materials. Food scraps (only use non-animal) count as wet; leaves, twigs, and wood ash count as dry.



3 WATER DURING DRY SPELLS
Yes, you should water your compost – rain water is fine, or you can lightly hose it. Just make sure that it's not soaking wet. A lack of moisture will slow down or stop the decomposition, so during very dry spells, at whatever time of year, remember to add a cup or two of water every now and again.



2 FEED IT
Your compost will be more nutrient rich and will mature quicker if you add a sprinkling of nitrogen-rich feed or well-rotted manure. Some of these products can help to make composting more effective.



4 GIVE IT A TURN
Regularly turn your compost – about once a week. This introduces the air needed to speed up the composting process. Use a garden fork but watch out for nesting hedgehogs and other wildlife.

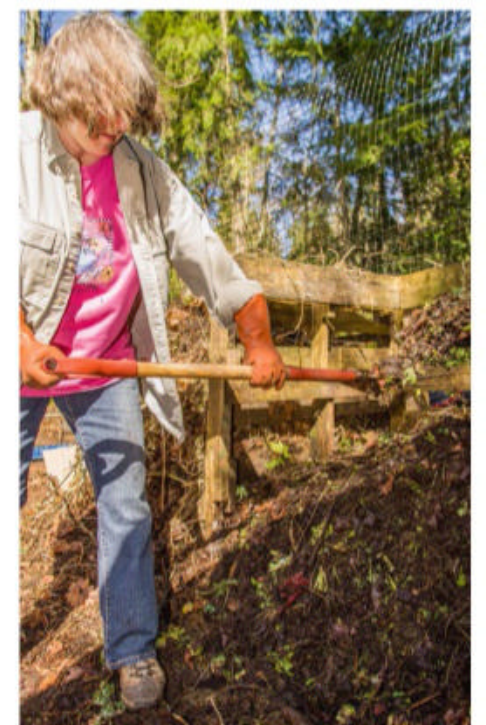


5 KEEP IT COVERED
It's important for your compost heap to be covered. Rain will cool the compost heap down and slow the composting process if it's left uncovered. If using a compost bin, cover it with the lid provided.

Turning compost

Some gardeners swear by turning compost, saying it's important to turn compost to add air to the mixture, essential for the chemical processes that make the compost. Without sufficient air, the compost can be compacted, slimy and rotting. This is often the case when you're making compost on a small scale and only add waste every so often. To combat this you should turn the mixture.

For best results, turn your compost as often as you can with a pitchfork. If you're making compost indoors in a small kitchen container, you can turn the contents with a long-handled kitchen utensil.



HOW TO... USE A GREENHOUSE

Don't be afraid to take your growing to the next step with a greenhouse. Here's everything you need to know

Learning how to use a greenhouse properly will allow you to successfully grow a variety of beautiful ornamentals, as well as fruit and vegetables. Having a greenhouse expands the range of plants you can grow and creates a useful work space, too.

Greenhouses range from small unheated glass huts used to grow tomatoes, to the monumental Victorian glasshouses at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Kew, London, where enormous tropical plants bloom in hot humidity.

Whether you're planning to build a DIY greenhouse or you're investing in an off-the-peg design, knowing how to use one to its full potential will expand the range of plants you're able to cultivate as well as your season of growth.

It can be a nursery, used to sow and raise seedlings and plant bulbs, before they are taken outside; it might contain edible crops, such as citrus, melon and peach, which prefer some warmth; its function could be ornamental, providing scent and colour in the bleak depths of winter; or a combination of all three. It could even be just a place to hang out under cover!

All types of greenhouse can be used to grow plants that don't cope well outdoors. Whether you have a traditional design with an aluminium or wooden frame and glass panels, or a more budget-friendly polytunnel, follow our tips on how to use a greenhouse and make the most of this practical growing space.

Greenhouses are ideal for seedlings and cuttings



Keep plants WARM AND PROTECTED

Whether you heat a greenhouse or not is dependent on what you want to grow. Each temperature offers a different range of planting options, so do bear this in mind:

UNHEATED

Without heat, you can use a greenhouse to grow ornamentals that dislike winter wet (such as alpine and camellias), as well as edibles, including salad leaves, spinach, tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers. To

expand your growing potential, but keep costs down, consider heating the greenhouse in spring and autumn only.

COOL

A year-round minimum of 7°C is great for enjoying a huge range of edibles and ornamentals: scented plants such as freesias, hedydium, mimosa and jasmine, as well as bougainvillea, succulents, citrus and peach, and a wide variety of veg and salad.



AIR FLOW

When thinking about how to use a greenhouse effectively, having a decent air flow is important.

It prevents extreme summer temperatures and excess humidity, both of which can damage plants. When required, open roof vents to allow hot air to escape and side vents to draw in fresh, cool air. When it's very hot, leave the door open as well; but when it's windy, never open vents on the windward side.

Extractor fans are an additional aid to be considered.

WARM

Maintaining 13°C or higher can be expensive in cold regions, but allows you to use a greenhouse as a lush, flowery glasshouse all year, with, for instance, bird of paradise (strelitzia), gardenias, orchids, ferns and palms. However, it is too hot for a lot of less exotic plants. At Parham House and Gardens in West Sussex, head gardener Andrew Humphris heats the greenhouses to a range of different temperatures. 'We keep the temperature in the main glasshouse at 5°C in the winter,' he says. 'While the other greenhouses are at 5-10°C to keep the worst of the frost off.'



Tradition Planthouse
from Hartley Botanic

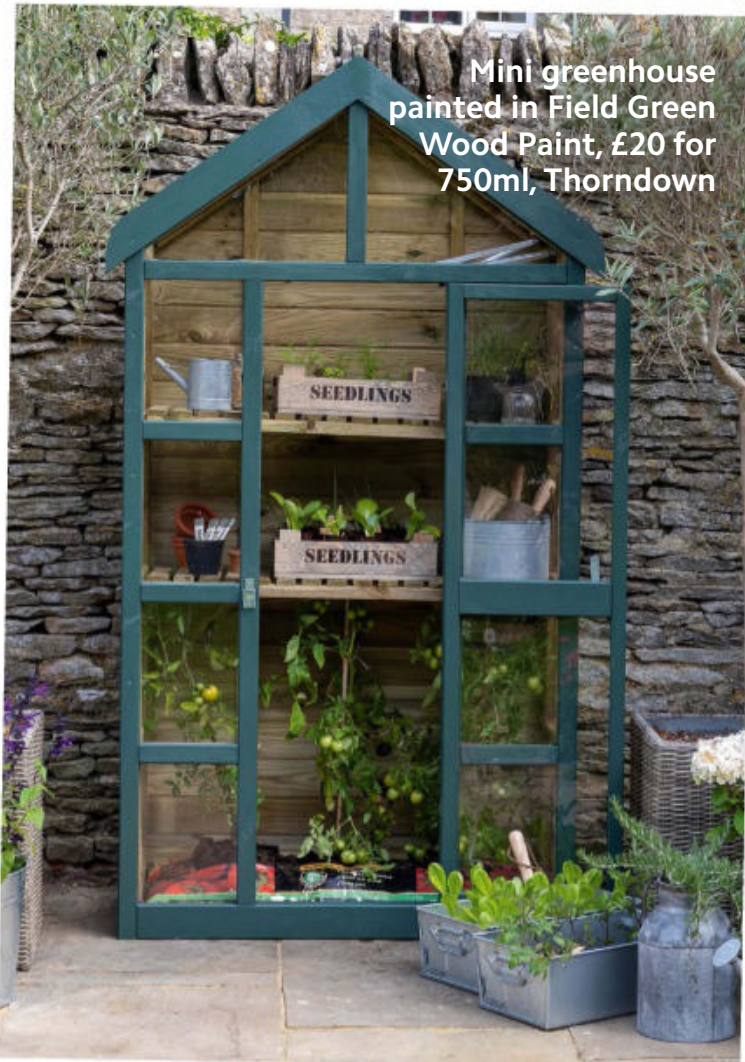
Your greenhouse SEASON BY SEASON

SUMMER

- Sow edibles, such as calabrese, salad leaves, French beans and parsley.
- Sow biennials, such as angelica, sweet William and foxgloves.
- Plant greenhouse-raised young plants outside.
- Prune fan-trained peaches and nectarines.

AUTUMN

- Sow edibles (such as carrots, salad leaves and turnips) and hardy annuals (such as cornflowers and sweet peas).
- Plant hippeastrum (amaryllis) bulbs and spring-flowering bulbs (such as tulips).
- Bring tender plants in for protection before the frosts.
- Insulate when the weather cools by attaching UV-stabilised bubble insulation to the interior walls, by rolling shade blinds down before dark, or by wrapping horticultural fleece around tender plants.
- Clean the greenhouse on a dry, sunny day. Take as much as possible outside, then turn off the power and cover sockets. Wipe down outside windows first, before cleaning inside. Apply wood preservative, if necessary. Remove dead leaves and slugs from pot plants, and – if need be – remove the top layer of compost and re-dress with a fresh layer, before bringing everything back in.
- Discard diseased plants.



Mini greenhouse painted in Field Green Wood Paint, £20 for 750ml, Thorndown

WINTER

- Sow edibles (such as lettuce, aubergines, French beans, beetroot, carrots, peas and radishes) in late winter, as well as sweet peas.
- Plant seed potatoes for harvesting new potatoes in spring, and lily bulbs in pots.
- Prune grapes.
- Dig the soil of empty greenhouse borders and replenish with compost.

SPRING

- Sow a wide variety of edibles and ornamental annuals for indoor and outdoor growing during early and mid-spring: from courgettes and tomatoes to cosmos and cleome.
- Plant dahlias and cannas in pots.
- Take young greenhouse-raised plants outside for planting in late spring, including brassicas.
- Pollinate nectarines and peaches by hand.
- Clean the greenhouse in early spring, if you didn't do it in autumn. (Ideally, autumn is the optimum time to clean your greenhouse as it removes any build-up of pests and diseases before winter, as well as shade paint, if you use it).



The Scotney greenhouse from Alitex at the 2021 Chelsea Flower Show



How can I heat my greenhouse?

Employ an electrician to lay outdoor cabling from the house and install heaters with waterproof sockets. Thermostatically controlled heaters prevent the need to keep checking a thermometer, and fan heaters distribute heat well. You could also opt for heated propagators and soil-warming cables. If you intend to use the greenhouse after dark in winter, have the electrician install lighting as well.

Controlling pests and disease

'In the greenhouse, pests and disease can be a big issue due to the warm, humid atmosphere,' says Parham's head gardener Andrew Humphris. 'Keeping your plants well fed, with the correct amount of watering, is vital as this will give you strong, healthy specimens, less prone to diseases.'

'Also keep your glasshouse and plants clean and tidy. This includes picking over and removing damaged leaves and dying flowers, which would otherwise go mouldy and attract further disease. At Parham, we use biological control, introducing predators for the most common pests throughout summer, which is pretty effective.'

For example, parasitic wasps can be used to get rid of aphids, whitefly and scale insects; and nematodes can be introduced for getting rid of slugs, vine weevils, mealy bugs and ants.

Avoid pesticides or sticky insect traps as they kill the natural predators that eradicate the problem.

CREATE SHADING FOR PLANTS IN SUMMER

SHADE PAINT This is easy to apply to the exterior of the glass. It lets light through, reduces temperatures and is washed off in the autumn. However, it is unattractive and can't be removed on cooler or cloudy days.

EXTERIOR BLINDS These designs can be pulled down when the heat soars. They are very effective, can look great and double up as winter insulation, but they aren't always cheap and need to be adjusted according to the weather.

MESH NETTING This is fitted to the outside of the greenhouse. It is effective and cheap, but fiddly to put up and can't be moved regularly.

INTERIOR BLINDS AND NETTING Although these are an option, they are best avoided, as they don't lower temperatures well and can get in the way of plants.

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DESIGN YOUR *perfect border*

Garden designer Tabi Jackson Gee lays out six border styles that you can plant in spring to reap the benefits next year

It's so tempting to go to the nursery on a sunny day and buy a variety of plants that you like the look of, without researching what they will work well with or where they will thrive.

That's where garden designers come in. We think of gardens as a whole, creating areas that share a common visual language and planting schemes with different environments in mind.

Spring is a great time to be planning your borders for next

spring and summer. Not only are the bare root plants and trees available to buy now much less expensive, but you will be giving your new border plenty of time to get its roots in, at the same time as sowing seeds and planting bulbs. Plus, as we head into the darker months again, who wouldn't want to be daydreaming about scented plants, colourful combinations and days whiled away in the great sunny outdoors?

LIGHT SHADE

Perhaps it's because we can't see it, but scent is often overlooked when it comes to garden design. However a garden without fragrance isn't fulfilling its potential. Your outdoor space should delight all your senses, and this border is created to have something flowering throughout the year that offers just that. Most of the plants I've chosen are fairly hardy, but the border will do best in a spot that has light shade for at least some of the day, and that doesn't get waterlogged.

TOP TIPS

- *Daphne* 'Perfume Princess', like most daphnes, doesn't like its roots getting dry – so make sure you keep them well watered during the hotter months.
- Put your *Hyacinthus orientalis* 'Delft Blue' near a path so you can enjoy its amazing scent.
- Both the daphne and osmanthus will appreciate a good mulch once a year.
- Add the sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) into the border in the summer to complement the lavender in both colour and scent.
- Don't forget to cut some of these stems to enjoy indoors, too!



Hyacinthus orientalis
'Delft Blue'



Osmanthus delavayi



Daphne
'Perfume Princess'



Lavandula angustifolia

The
scented
one

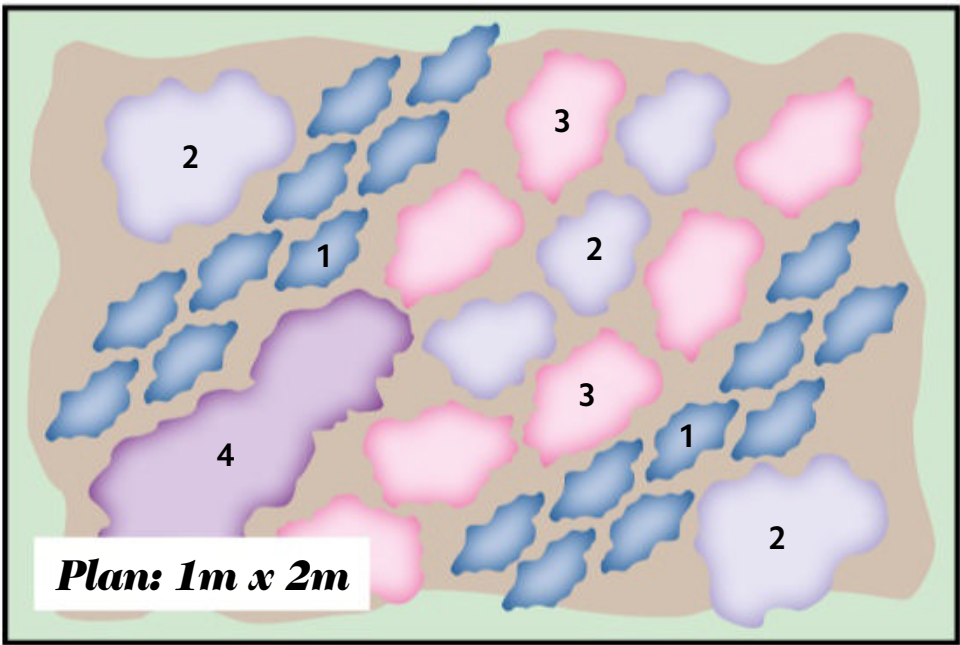
Optional
extras



Lathyrus odoratus
'Oxford Blue'



Lathyrus odoratus
'Charlie's Angel'

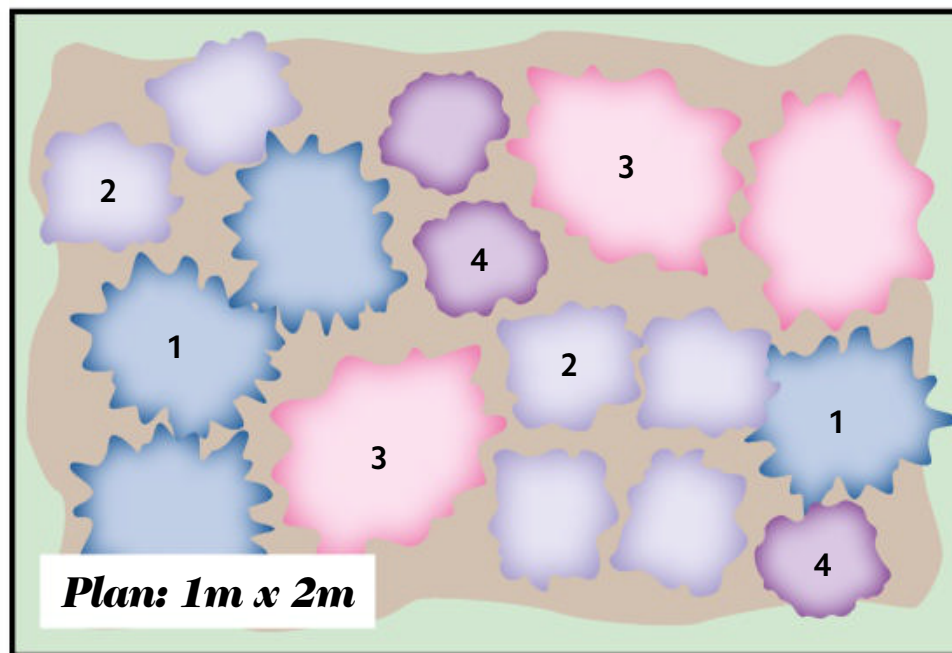


Plan: 1m x 2m

- 1. *Hyacinth orientalis* 'Delft Blue' ● 2. *Daphne* 'Perfume Princess' ● 3. *Lavandula angustifolia* ● 4. *Osmanthus delavayi*
OPTIONAL EXTRAS *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Oxford Blue'; *Lathyrus odoratus* 'Charlie's Angel'

SHADY SPOTS

There are no two ways about it, shady gardens or shady areas can be a challenge. So much so that people often write them off as a sad corner, or use them for bicycle storage, bonfires or sheds. But there are many beautiful plants that enjoy shade, even some evergreen ones. I think this scheme would be very useful along a side return or a front drive where you want evergreens but also something to enjoy in terms of flowers and scent. The sarcococca's common name is sweet box and its smell is divine. It also shows up in the depths of winter when we often need cheering up the most.

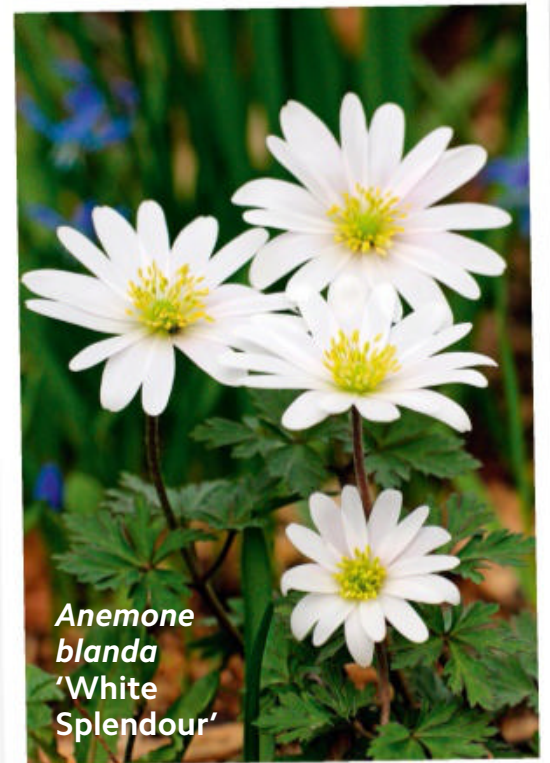


● 1. *Bergenia* 'Ice Queen' ● 2. *Heuchera* 'Black Beauty' ● 3. *Sarcococca hookeriana* 'Winter Gem' ● 4. *Pachysandra terminalis*
OPTIONAL EXTRAS *Cyclamen hederifolium*; *Anemone blanda* 'White Splendour'

Optional extras



Cyclamen hederifolium



Anemone blanda 'White Splendour'



Sarcococca hookeriana 'Winter Gem'

The evergreen one



Bergenia 'Ice Queen' (from £10.99, Waitrose Garden)



Heuchera 'Black Beauty'



Pachysandra terminalis

TOP TIPS

- Lightly prune the sarcococca to help keep its shape.
- Remove faded flower spikes from the heuchera, and watch out for vine weevil.
- After flowering, remove the flowerheads from the bergenia and apply a slow-release fertiliser around the plant. Lift and divide large clumps in early spring as these can get quite carried away.
- Place the sarcococca near a pathway so you can enjoy its wonderful scent in the winter.
- If you add the *Anemone blanda*, plant it under a tree or a shrub, where it will create a lovely carpet of white flowers in the spring.

SUNNY & DRY

Gravel gardens aren't just for the Mediterranean, as anyone who's visited Beth Chatto's 'car park' garden will know. Here, in this border, peachy oranges and zesty greens rustle together to create an ethereal scheme. This style of planting requires little watering; the gravel mulch helps the soil retain moisture and keeps weeds at bay. It is ideal for raised beds where you can enjoy the swaying grasses from indoors or out, but it will work in most sunny, dry spots and the plants will tolerate fairly poor soil quite happily.

TOP TIPS

- Give these plants space; this is not a crowded border but a lighter touch planting scheme that lets each species sing.
- Unlike bigger, tougher grasses, *Stipa tenuissima* doesn't need an annual chop; instead, pull your fingers through it gently to remove any dead parts.
- Deadhead the geum regularly in the summer to prolong flowering.
- Experiment with bulbs and seeds; try adding alliums or nerines for colour before and after summer.
- Choose a light, bright gravel for your mulch layer – it will make the colours in the border really pop.



Geum
'Mai Tai'



Stipa
tenuissima



Iris
'Alaska'



Euphorbia characias
subsp. wulfenii

The
gravel
one

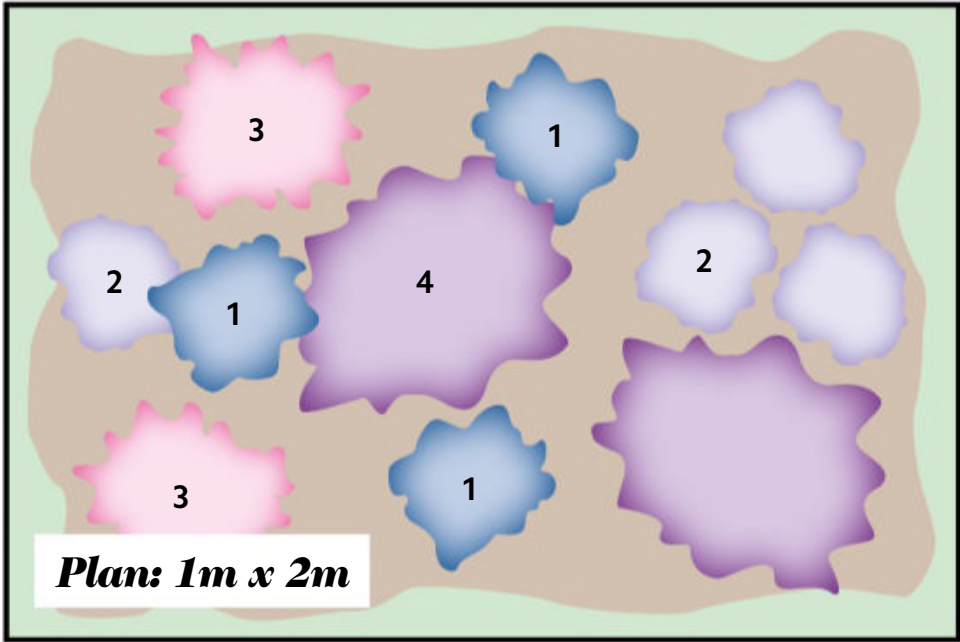
Optional extras



Papaver
somniferum
'Lilac Pompom'



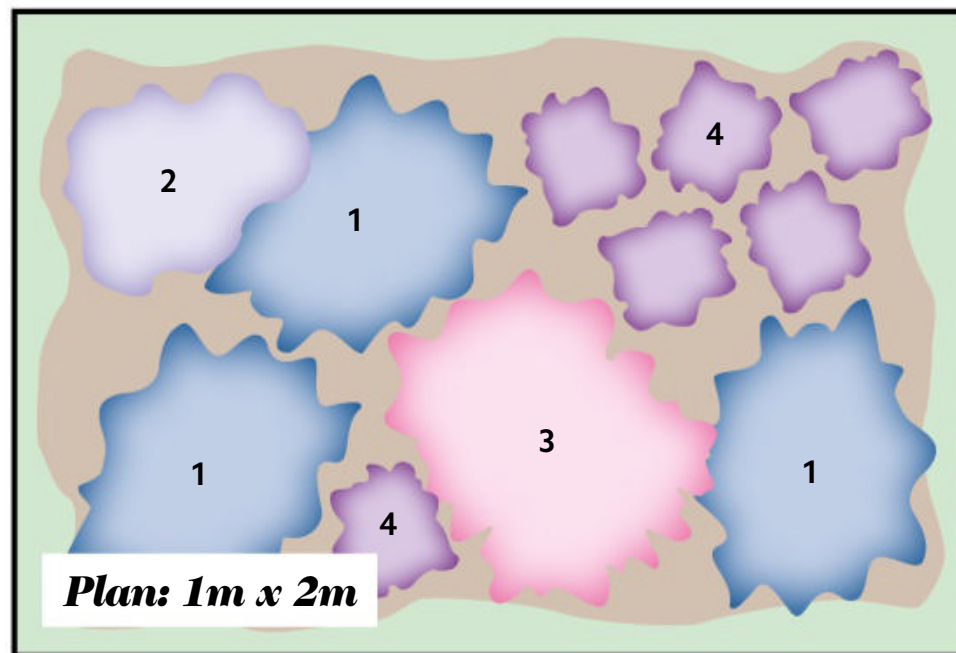
Achillea 'Peachy
Seduction'



- 1. *Stipa tenuissima* ● 2. *Geum* 'Mai Tai' ● 3. *Iris* 'Alaska'
 - 4. *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii*
- OPTIONAL EXTRAS** *Papaver somniferum* 'Lilac Pompom';
Achillea 'Peachy Seduction'

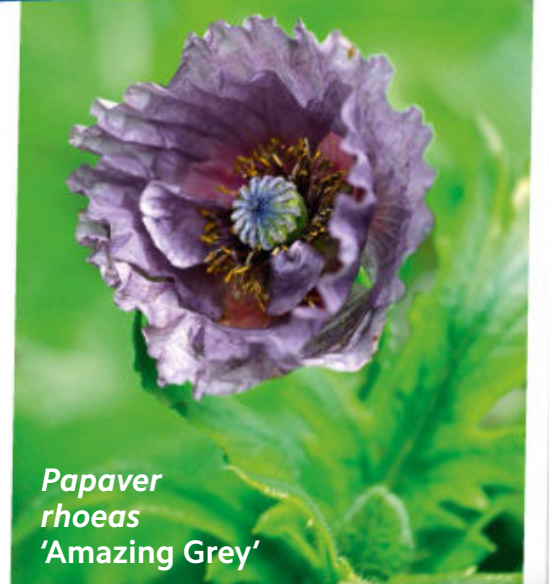
FULL SUN

Inspired by the prairies of North America (parts of which have a similar climate to areas of the UK), prairie-style planting is increasingly popular due to its wonderful matrix of colours and textures – consisting of grasses and flowers that need the same conditions – and its natural, unmanicured look. Like wildflower meadows, these landscapes are loose and relaxed – there isn't any formal topiary in sight. Most of the plants chosen here are versatile and will work on clay and chalk soils, but will appreciate free-draining soil. A spot in full sun will give the best results.

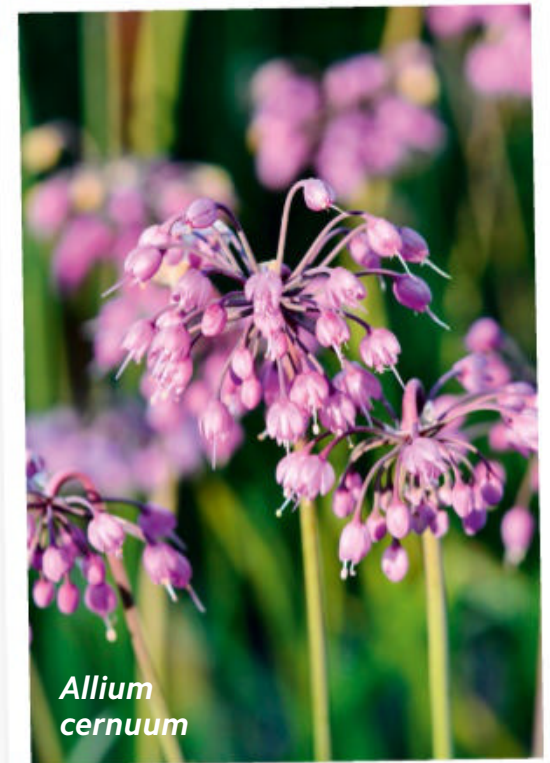


- 1. *Sanguisorba* 'Tanna' ● 2. *Carex testacea* 'Prairie Fire'
- 3. *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* 'Transparent'
- 4. *Echinacea purpurea* **OPTIONAL EXTRAS** *Papaver rhoeas* 'Amazing Grey'; *Allium cernuum*

Optional extras



Papaver rhoeas
'Amazing Grey'



Allium cernuum



Sanguisorba
'Tanna'



Carex testacea
'Prairie Fire'



Echinacea purpurea



Molinia caerulea
subsp. *arundinacea*
'Transparent'

The wild one

TOP TIPS

- Give the molinia lots of space and keep an eye on it as it establishes so it doesn't get overshadowed by the other plants.
- You can just cut these plants back once a year in early spring; sanguisorba in particular looks beautiful through the winter thanks to its floaty seedheads.
- The poppies can be sown in the autumn and they'll surprise you by where they come up.
- Having said that, be careful not to be too diligent with your weeding – don't accidentally pull the poppies out!
- Repeat this scheme over a bigger scale for greater drama, mixing in dogwoods for structure and more winter colour.

PARTIAL SHADE

Colourful, wild, rambling, inviting... a cottage garden is quintessentially English. But while the variety of classic bulbs, annuals, perennials, flowering shrubs and climbers that we associate with it can be used in many settings, it's only when they're carefully combined that they create that romantic look. Plenty of light and sun will make this border easy to grow and care for. The plants I've chosen here will tolerate partial shade and most slightly acidic, slightly alkaline or neutral soils.

TOP TIPS

- This isn't a scheme for the faint-hearted with its mix of bold colours, but it's certainly cheery!
- Divide the geranium after a few years if it gets too big for its boots.
- Go big with the bulbs; most of the plants in this scheme flower in the summer – bulbs will reward you with fab spring colour.
- *Alcea rosea* 'Halo Blush' is a big hollyhock, so position it at the side of the border, especially if don't want to block a view.
- If you repeat this across a bigger space, add some rambling roses climbing up obelisks or a sunny south-facing wall.



Thalictrum delavayi
'Hewitt's Double'



Alcea rosea
'Halo Blush'



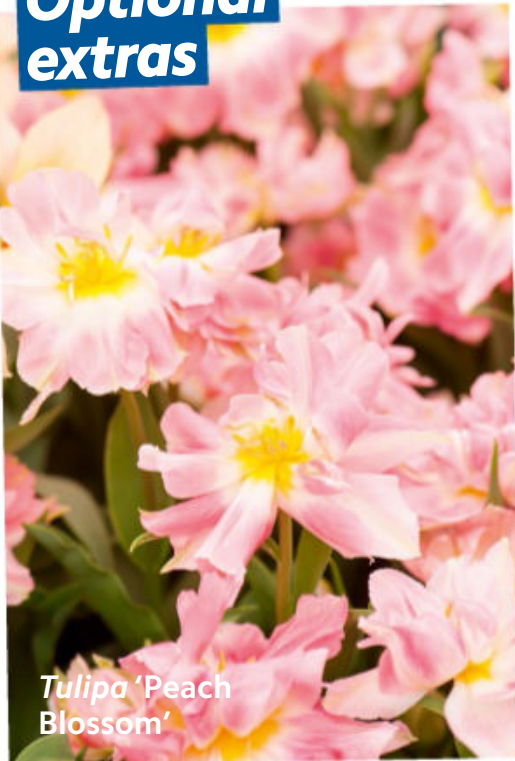
Geranium
'Orion'



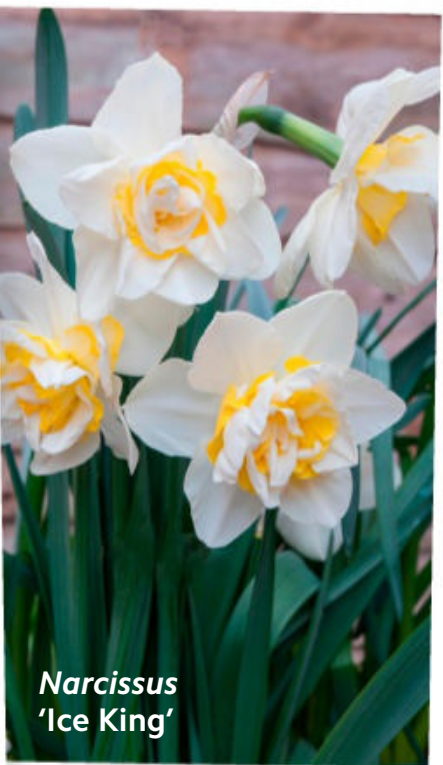
Tiarella
'Pink Skyrocket'

The classic one

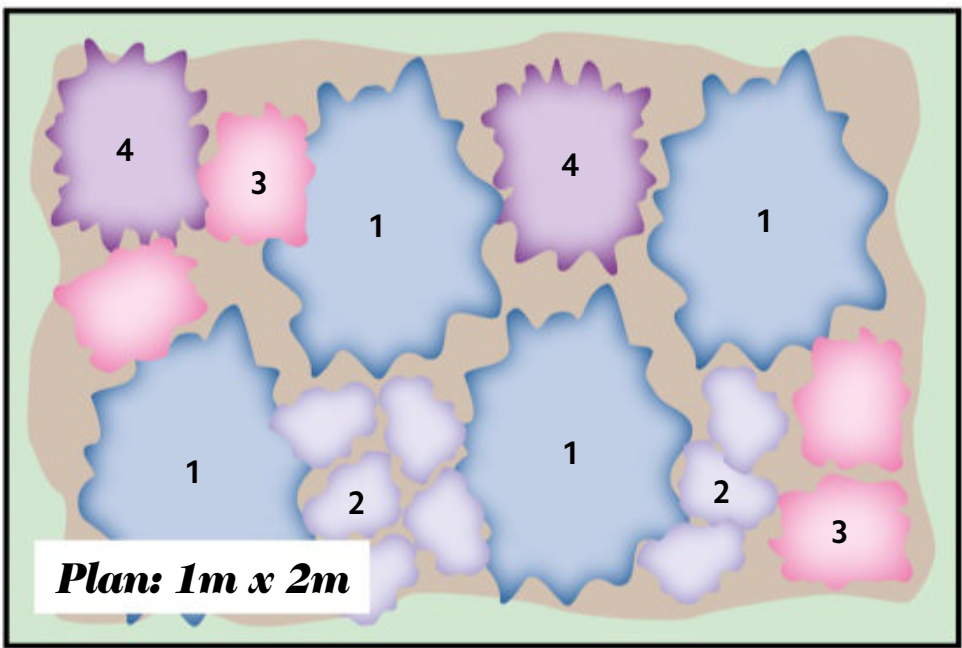
Optional extras



Tulipa 'Peach Blossom'



Narcissus
'Ice King'

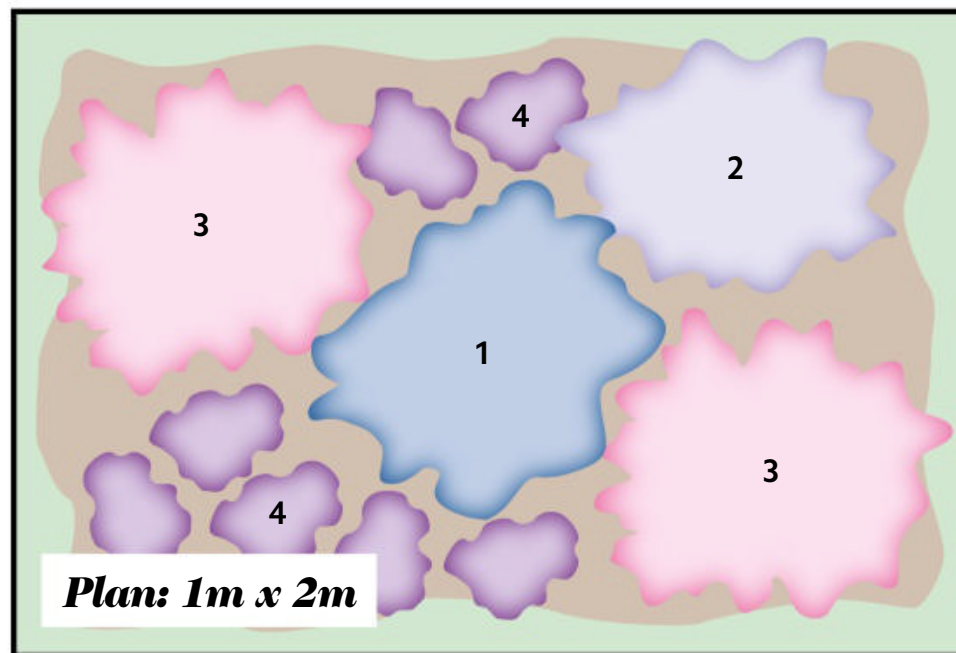


Plan: 1m x 2m

- 1. *Thalictrum delavayi* 'Hewitt's Double' ● 2. *Tiarella* 'Pink Skyrocket' ● 3. *Geranium* 'Orion' ● 4. *Alcea rosea* 'Halo Blush'
- OPTIONAL EXTRAS** *Tulipa* 'Peach Blossom'; *Narcissus* 'Ice King'

FULL SUN/ PARTIAL SHADE

Many of us want to have a low-maintenance garden, and there are many ways to achieve this. Usually evergreen shrubs are a good bet, as they do their thing with little help (except for the occasional pruning). But if you'd like a bit more interest, this border is a good start – and still very low-key in terms of care, thanks to its mix of shrubs, grasses and long-flowering perennials. This scheme would like full sun but will tolerate part shade. Just make sure the site is not too windy, or the hydrangea will get battered.



● 1. *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum' ● 2. *Hydrangea arborescens* Strong Annabelle ● 3. *Miscanthus sinensis* ● 4. *Geranium* Dreamland ('Bremdream') **OPTIONAL EXTRAS** *Tulipa* 'Lilac Perfection'; *Muscari* 'Baby's Breath'

Optional extras



The easy one



TOP TIPS

- Give the miscanthus plenty of space and put it in a spot where it gets a good amount of sun.
- Leave the flowerheads on the hydrangea over winter; its golden colours will look fantastic against the tall, textural miscanthus.
- Keep the pittosporum's shape nice and rounded to contrast with the height and spread of the other plants.
- *Muscari* 'Baby's Breath' has a wonderful scent, so put it somewhere that you can enjoy it.
- If you like this planting scheme and want to try something a bit higher maintenance, this would work really well combined with the wild border in a larger space.

Easy **LAWN** **CARE** *tips*

These essential treatments will keep your grass in good health over winter



Scarify the grass

September is a good time to scarify your lawn. Go over the grass with a spring-tine rake, raking in one direction to remove loose thatch and moss. This helps rainwater seep down where it's needed most. Repeat again in April. If you have a large lawn, consider buying or hiring an automatic one.

Mud coils

At this time of year, you might start to notice little coils of soft mud and slime appearing on the surface of your lawn. These are worm casts. Don't tread on them, as they will spread into the grass and breed weeds and moss. Instead, wait until they dry and then lightly brush them away with an old-fashioned broom or the up-turned head of a rake.



What to avoid

Don't walk on the grass on frosty mornings as this will damage the blades. Scarifying, aerating and top-dressing the lawn in frosty weather or when the soil is waterlogged is also a no-no.



Mowing in autumn

If you want to keep up the mowing throughout autumn ensure the blades are kept high to avoid damaging weakened grass and roughing up the soil underneath.

Moss removal

Try a homemade eco-friendly remedy to get rid of moss. Drench with a solution of washing-up liquid diluted with water. Use a plastic spray bottle for the mixture so you can get up close and angle it accurately. The moss will turn brown and dry after a couple of days, then you can simply rake it out.



Remove dead leaves

Collect leaves throughout the season, instead of dealing with them all in one go. Benefits include reduced diseases and moss growth. Set aside piles of collected leaves in corners of your garden as habitats for insects.



Aerate the surface

Over time lawns can become compact, preventing rainwater from soaking in properly. Drive in a fork at regular intervals all over the lawn to a depth of around 10cm deep, then gently rock it. To improve drainage, sprinkle with coarse sand, then sweep over with a brush.



Try some TLC

Try 'over-seeding' once a year to maintain a healthy lawn. Mix grass seed with fertiliser and sprinkle the entire space with large quantities of it to rejuvenate a tired, worn-out lawn. This fills in damaged and thinning areas, while improving the colour of the grass and reducing the chance of weed and moss invasions.



Feed it

Your lawn will benefit from a nitrogen-rich liquid feed at this time of year, and you should see an improvement within a week. Do this on a cool, overcast day so the sun doesn't evaporate away any benefits of the feed before it has had a chance to kick in. When you've finished, water the feed in well so it gets to the roots of the grass where it's needed the most. To save water, feed your lawn on a day when rain is scheduled for the evening or overnight.



Treat bald patches

Loosen soil with a fork, fill with a handful of potting compost and sprinkle over a grass-seed mix, choosing either one for shady lawns or hard-wearing or drought-tolerant mixes. Water well using a spray attachment, and protect the area from birds with a piece of chicken wire.



How to CHOOSE A TREE

There is a tree to suit every garden. Follow our guide of dos and don'ts to select the perfect specimen for your space

Trees are the most dominant and important plants in a garden. The right tree in the right place adds greenery, structure, height, and perhaps flowers, fruit or colourful bark; it lures and encourages wildlife; and – being so big – adds a soulfulness that other plants simply can't offer.

Choosing which tree to buy is a fun task, and time should be taken to get it right. 'There is a suitable tree for every situation,' says Tony Kirkham, Head of the Arboretum, Gardens

and Horticulture Services at Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and author of a new book: *The Kew Gardener's Guide to Growing Trees* (£12.99, Frances Lincoln). 'Having estimated the maximum size that the space can accommodate and the conditions in the potential site, you can then go deeper into the tree's ornamental attributes. Trees have many features that we can enjoy through the seasons: for example, the leaf size, shape and colour; flowers; fruits; and bark.'

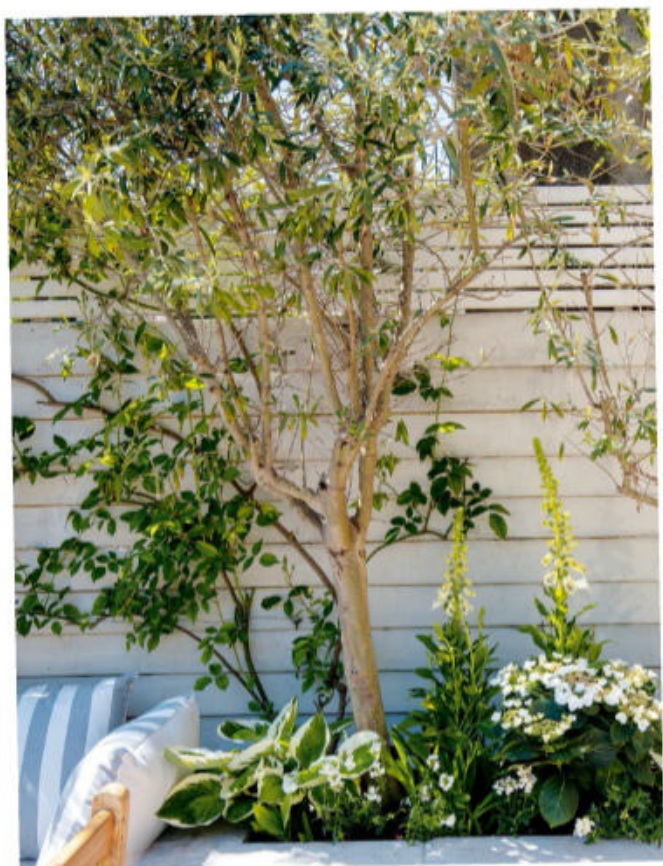
Whichever tree you choose, it will help you to be more eco-friendly, and this is why many leading garden designers are using more trees to create woodland-style gardens. 'Besides their beauty and elegance, trees give a whole range of benefits which affect the wider environment,' says Tony. Not only are they proven to boost our mental wellbeing, they filter greenhouse gases and improve air quality. All these benefits mean that every garden, no matter how small, should have a tree.

Selecting the right tree for you

Consider what you want the tree for. 'Do you want to plant for privacy?' asks Tony, 'or as a single ornamental specimen in the lawn or in a border for



The tree fern can reach up to 4m





*‘If you’re after a tropical
vibe then consider a
slow-growing tree fern that
produces masses of fronds’*

Top tip

‘Work out what the overall height of the tree is when mature and plant it three-quarters of its height away from the house,’ advises Tony.



*Amelanchier
alnifolia 'Obelisk'*
(pictured)
Above, *Prunus
incisa 'The Bride'*

seasonal interest or to attract wildlife?’ He emphasises taking time to select the right spot for the right tree: somewhere that doesn’t block out too much light or spoil a view and won’t encroach on a neighbour’s garden once fully grown. A good supplier (such as Bluebell Arboretum) can suggest trees suited to your soil type, light levels, and garden size, as well as extra needs, such as reducing noise pollution or attracting songbirds.

Welcoming wildlife

Rowans (such as rosy-berried *Sorbus vilmorinii* ‘Pink Charm’) and crab apples (such as compact *Malus* ‘Adirondack’) provide nectar-rich spring blossom for bees, as well as autumn fruit for birds. Hollies (such as self-fertile *Ilex aquifolium* ‘J.C. van Tol’) offer birds evergreen shelter and winter berries. And birch trees (such as blush-barked *Betula utilis* subsp. *albosinensis* ‘Pink Champagne’) provide birds with seeds and a wealth of insects.

Year-round interest

Evergreens, such as holly and yew, which are available in gold or green forms, can be grown as topiary or hedging to contain their size. Trees with beautiful bark also shine



Portugal laurel (pictured)
Left, olive tree

4 of the best... GARDEN TREES



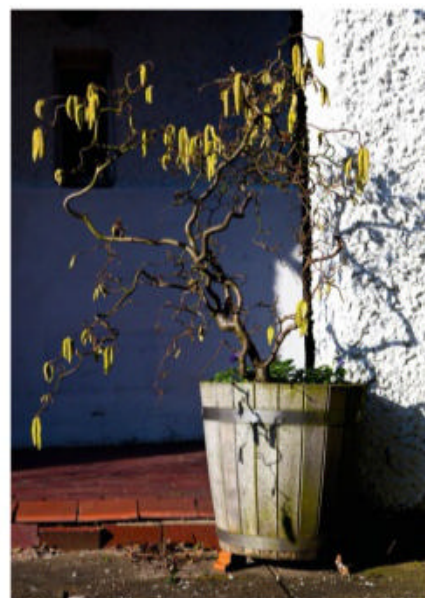
JAPANESE MAPLE

The green leaves of *Acer palmatum* ‘Osakazuki’ blaze scarlet in autumn. Grow in sheltered semi-shade, in moist, well-drained neutral to acid soil. If you have alkaline soil, plant it in a large pot. It reaches 1.8m in 10 years. **H: 4.5m**



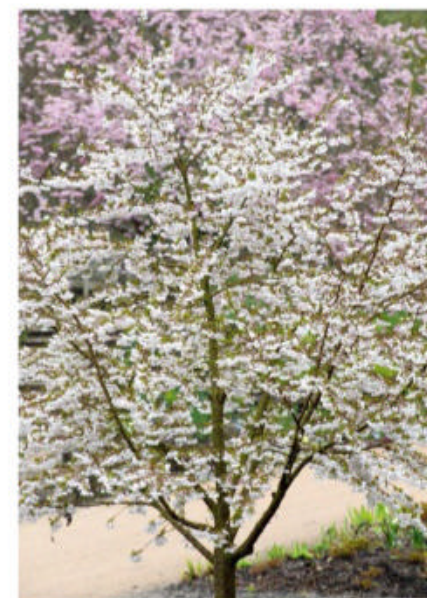
MAGNOLIA

When this elegant deciduous *Magnolia* ‘Sayonara’ is in flower, all other trees pale by comparison. The large, scented white goblets bloom on bare branches in May. If you prefer pink magnolias, try ‘Heaven Scent’. **H: 6m**



CORKSCREW HAZEL

The twisting branches of the slow-growing *Corylus avellana* ‘Contorta’ look bewitched! In March, it is hung with catkins and in winter, the coiled branches are on full show. Remove straight stems that shoot at the base. **H: 3m**



ORNAMENTAL CHERRY

Prunus ‘The Bride’ is a beautiful deciduous tree for a small garden, producing a mass of white flowers with red centres from pink buds in spring, luring bees. Grow in well-drained, fertile soil in full sun. **H: 3m**



throughout the year: *Acer griseum* has a peeling copper trunk and the boughs of *Prunus serrula* 'Branklyn' (pictured below) resemble polished mahogany. But if you want both in one package, *Arbutus x reyorum* 'Marina' has evergreen leaves, as well as cinnamon bark that peels to reveal lime bark beneath; on top of that, it boasts autumn flowers, followed by strawberry-like fruit, which the Portuguese make into the hair-raising liquor Aguardente de Medronhos (Medronho fire water); its only downfall is its slow growth.

Something fruity

Karim Habibi, owner of fruit nursery Keepers, says his favourite is a bush-trained medlar (*Mespilus germanica*), which produces caramel-flavoured fruit: 'Medlars are beautiful trees, unusual and easy to grow. The blossom comes late in the spring, and the tree matures to a good shape with very interesting bark.' Apples are also fantastic garden trees, providing both blossom and fruit, and Karim recommends 'Discovery' and 'Egremont Russet'. Since fruit trees require regular pruning, they may not suit someone wanting a low-maintenance tree.

Trees to avoid

Giants (such as oak and cedar of Lebanon), which will dwarf your house, unless you live in a stately home. Eucalyptus has a bad reputation because people grow it to create size at speed, and it eventually surges to a whopping 25m, often creating neighbour disputes; however, its size can be controlled with pruning. Tender trees (such as olive) are best avoided if you live in a cold area.

Growing trees in pots

For compact garden spaces small Japanese maples (such as *Acer palmatum* 'Beni-maiko', which has spectacular autumn leaves) are ideal, as are bay trees grown as lollipop shapes. Apple trees on dwarfing rootstock are also excellent in containers.

Tony points out that a few large trees adjust well to pots by suppressing their growth: 'These naturally develop into bonsai trees while still looking healthy and happy.' He recommends Ginkgo biloba, which has golden leaves in the autumn, and pink-flowered *Albizia julibrissin* for this.

GROW VEG *in* POTS

You don't need a huge garden – organic food grower Claire Ratinon shows how to grow a plentiful supply in pots

If you don't have a garden with a dedicated veg patch, growing vegetables in pots is a great alternative. Those with tiny outside spaces, paved-over gardens, balconies or even just a windowsill in the sun can turn their hopeful green thumbs towards growing edible plants in pots

Growing crops in containers is accessible, flexible and as satisfying as growing into soil if you know how to give your plants what they need to grow and thrive. It's a great option for those who only have little

pockets of outside space, rent their homes or aren't comfortable with kneeling down and would rather garden without bending over.

Although it's true that not everything will grow happily in a pot, there are benefits to container gardening. Your pot-dwelling crops will require more regular attention, which means spotting possible issues earlier than with plants in the ground. Also when you see an issue, like the appearance of a pest, it's easier to isolate the afflicted plant and intervene before the issue spreads.

Tips for success

1 Water generously. Plants in pots will take up all the water fairly quickly – especially in hot weather – so ensure they don't wither and die.

2 Most multipurpose, peat-free compost contain enough nutrients for 1-2 months' growth so from that point onwards, your plant will need to be fed. Liquid seaweed offers a wide spectrum of minerals and nutrients that are necessary for healthy plant growth, especially if you're growing crops that flower and fruit.

3 Certain plants – tall ones in particular – will need additional support. Peas appreciate knobbly twigs or nets to scramble up; tomatoes and peppers may need to be tied into a stake. If a plant becomes top heavy, put bricks or stones in the pot base to stop them toppling over.



Top tip

When it comes to position, consider the spread of plants when fully grown to ensure all plants get access to sunlight.



BEST VEGETABLES TO GROW IN POTS



SALAD LEAVES

Sprinkle a salad seed mix over the soil and cover with 1cm of compost. Water with a fine spray so soil is not splashed up on the leaves. Snip a few leaves regularly.



POTATOES

Cover seed potatoes with 15cm compost, water well. Once foliage emerges, top with more compost; keep earthing up to 60cm. Harvest when foliage turns yellow.



CHILLIES

Stake large-fruited varieties and pinch out the main stem at 20-25cm to encourage branching. Dose the plants with general-purpose feed or diluted tomato feed with every third or fourth watering.



COURGETTES

Although easy to grow, cucurbits need warmth, so pop seedlings on a sunny windowsill and plant out from the end of May. Protect from slugs and cover with cloches on cool nights. Keep plants well watered.



DWARF BEANS

Position sturdy canes or pea sticks in the container for the young plant to scramble upwards. Pick the pods regularly when they are young and tender.



OTHER VEG FOR POTS

Annual herbs such as parsley and basil. Edible flowers like nasturtiums. Dwarf tomatoes. Chard and kale.

Challenges

Of course, there are challenges to consider if you want your plants to flourish. Life in a pot means that plant roots won't be able to reach out deeper into the ground when they need more water and nutrients so they'll rely on you. Starting plants from seed requires a balance of good light and water to get them off to a strong start, so consider sourcing plugs from a garden centre or online supplier. Some crops are simply too large for your average container garden – make sure the effort doesn't outweigh the reward.

The *beginner's* *guide to...* **NO-DIG GARDENING**

The trend for no-dig gardening is really taking off. Let's get you started...



What is no-dig gardening?

There are three key things to remember: first, the soil is left undisturbed so beneficial organisms can multiply. Second, the soil is fed with organic matter. Third, compost mulches are topped up annually to improve soil structure.



Decide on sizing

You don't need a large area for a no-dig plot. One bed of 1-1.2m width and any length is all you need to get growing. And you don't need raised beds, which attract slugs when they start decaying and can be expensive to install.

Prep the chosen area

Cover the patch with cardboard as it will biodegrade over a year, killing the weeds underneath. Top with a layer of compost or well-rotted manure, at least 15cm in the first year, then add another 5cm every year. Plant straight into the compost as roots pass through the decaying cardboard after a couple of months.



The benefits

It saves a lot of time and effort, it's easy to manage and there are fewer weeds. It's also good for the soil as it means a better balance of undisturbed soil organisms. Providing you top up the organic matter such as compost or leaf mould every year you'll have all the richness you need.



When to start

Any time as long as the ground isn't frozen. It's always best to make the most of the growing season and start in early spring if you can. But if you have a perennial weed problem autumn is best as this is when weeds start to die off.



Better for weeding

Fewer weeds germinate in undisturbed soil, and compost mulches on the surface make it easy to pull out any stray ones. Cut back strong perennial weeds like nettles or docks before covering them as they may break through the cardboard.



Necessary equipment

One of the best things is that you need very little equipment. Some cardboard and organic matter, which can be garden or store-bought compost or manure, are all it takes, plus a spade and wheelbarrow.



Environmental gains

No-dig and organic go hand in hand. One of the main reasons no-dig gardening is becoming so popular is that it's eco-friendly. It keeps nutrients in the soil and requires less watering as it holds onto the moisture, making it more stable. And being rich with nutrients means it doesn't require fertiliser.



Ideal plant picks

No-dig beds are ideal for growing vegetables, fruit and flowers for cutting. In the first year courgettes, pumpkins, squash and potatoes will all be very happy growing this way and can easily send their roots down into the soil. In the second year you should be able to grow whatever you want as the compost will have broken down. Overall, just grow whatever you like to eat. In a no-dig garden there really aren't any rules!



Deter slugs

Organise your patch so you can avoid slugs in the first place, with no dark nooks and crannies for them to lurk in. Locate it in a sunny place and use compost as a main mulch. Failing that, set up beer traps or use copper tape.



HOW TO

Plant a wildflower MEADOW

You don't need rolling fields to enjoy the romance of a wildlife-rich meadow. All you need is a small sunny spot in the garden

There's nothing quite as lovely as a summer meadow – so it's no wonder that meadow-style planting in domestic gardens has enjoyed a surge in popularity in recent years. Thankfully, you don't need acres of ground to grow native wildflowers – you can create a mini-meadow in a patch as small as 1sq m.

For a successful meadow there are a couple of things to consider. Firstly, aim for diversity. Even in a tiny meadow you can attract a surprising number of different insects – the secret is to choose a mix with a large number of flowering plants. A ratio of around 80:20 grass to wildflowers is normal, but some mixes feature more blooms.

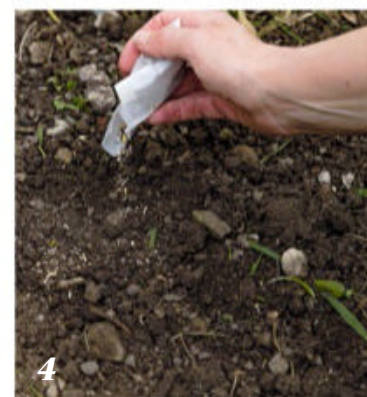
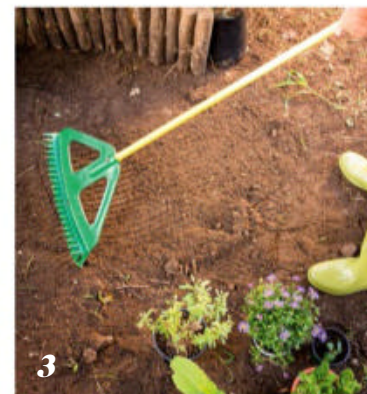
Knowing when and how to cut it back is also important. If your meadow is annual, lift plants and compost them, then dig the ground over. Never dig a perennial meadow – it is a permanent grassland and should be treated like a lawn. Cut back after flowering, leave the flowerheads and grass on the ground for a few days to shed their seed, then rake up. Mow the site until the first frosts.



This seating area by Anthea Harrison Garden Design (antheaharrison.co.uk) is enclosed by meadow-style flowerbeds

Step by step

- 1** Choose your site – a sunny spot on level ground is ideal. Strip off the turf and put it on your compost heap, or use it to repair gaps in the lawn.
- 2** Remove weeds as soon as they appear – perennial weeds will soon overwhelm your wildflowers.
- 3** Rake over the soil to create a crumb-like finish that's perfect for sowing.
- 4** Plant any plugs, and then evenly sprinkle over the seed. If seed is very fine, mix it with fine sand for ease of sowing. Water in with a fine spray.
- 5** Cover your patch of meadow with netting to prevent birds from feasting on the seeds, then watch and wait for the beauty to unfold!



WORDS: TERESA CONWAY. PHOTOS: ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



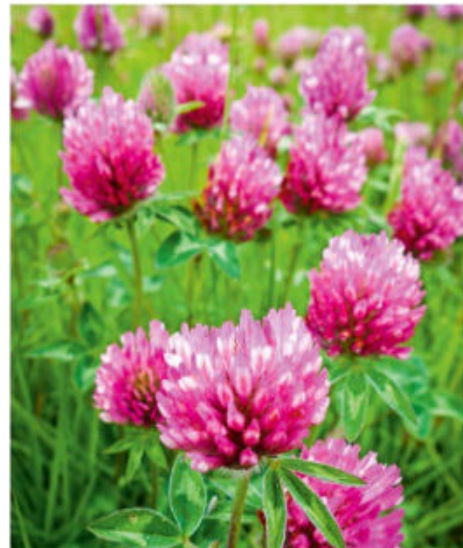
TOP TIP

There are companies that specialise in area-specific seed mixes. British Wildflower Seeds (britishwildflowermeadowseeds.co.uk) offers a dizzying array, plus options for coastal sites, sandy soil, light shade and mixes chosen with butterflies, bees and moths in mind. The Special General Meadow Seed Mix features cornflowers and field poppies to add colour while you wait for the perennial species to get started.



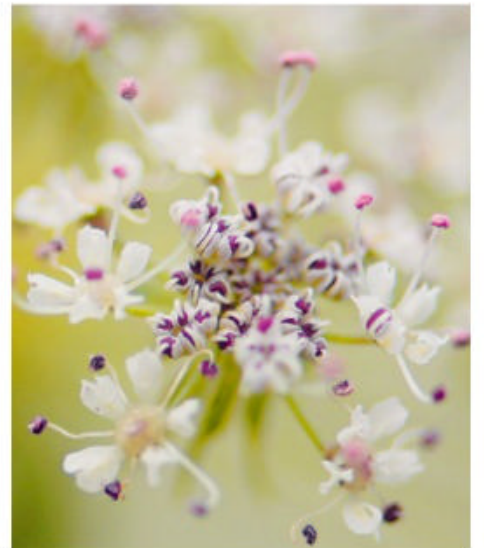
PLANT A WILDFLOWER MEADOW

6 of the best MINI-MEADOW ESSENTIALS



Trifolium pratense

Bumblebees love these pinkish red clover flowers, which appear from May to September. They're vigorous, so remove surplus growth to give others a chance. **Perennial. H30cm**



Daucus carota

No good for eating, the wild carrot has lacy white umbels tinged with pink when in bud. After flowering, the dried bracts turn inwards to create a basket-like effect. **Biennial. H75cm**



Lotus corniculatus

A food source for bees and caterpillars, the pea-like bright yellow blooms are followed by seed pods that resemble bird's feet (hence the name bird's-foot trefoil). **Perennial. H30cm**



Knautia arvensis

With lilac-blue pincushion-like flowerheads, field scabious is a perfect pick to attract bees, butterflies, moths and hoverflies. The flowers will keep appearing for months. **Perennial. H1.2m**



Centaurea nigra

Features thistle-like purple flowerheads on branching stems – the seedheads are loved by birds. Happy in the sun or part shade, plants will self-seed. **Perennial. H75cm**



Rhinanthus minor

If you're creating a meadow for life, yellow rattle is key. This annual sends out roots that grow into those of any neighbouring grasses, thus preventing them from taking over. **Annual. H30cm**

The beginner's guide to... ECO GARDENING

Small changes make a big difference to your garden's impact on the environment



Make your own compost

Use grass clippings, vegetable peelings and prunings, then mix with shredded newspaper. Buy a bin or use an out-of-the-way corner. Turn the compost occasionally with a fork. In six months to a year you should have a lovely, crumbly mix.



Give wildlife a home

Let a section get overgrown. Try leaving a patch of nettles or a pile of prunings in a corner. Put up bird and bat boxes, and design a bug hotel. Make a 15x15cm hole in the base of a fence to welcome hedgehogs. A hedge is far more wildlife friendly than a fence or wall, as it offers nesting sites for birds.

Plant for the bees

The recent decline in the number of bees and other pollinating insects could have serious consequences for us all because so many food crops depend on them. You can help by choosing to make space for a mix of pollinator-friendly plants in your garden such as foxgloves, buddleia, echinacea, lavender and cosmos.



Grow your own

Why not turn a corner of your garden into a vegetable patch? Supermarket produce often travels hundreds of miles before it reaches the shelves, but nothing beats the taste of produce cooked within minutes of being picked. Collect your harvested vegetables in a traditional trug, like this one from Sarah Raven.



Recycle and reuse

Plastic pots can't be recycled and end up as landfill so reuse them wherever possible. Use old egg boxes and cardboard loo roll tubes for planting seeds. If you're buying new equipment, opt for those made using recycled materials. Visit reclamation yards to find unique pre-loved garden accessories.



Leave your lawn

Attract pollinators by allowing your lawn to grow until the end of summer. You'll be amazed at how many wildflowers pop up. Or wait longer in between mows. Dandelions provide pollen, while white clover is always a big hit with honeybees.



Green up walls

As well as looking good, vertical planting on walls can help to insulate your home and reduce heating costs, especially useful in older properties that are hard to insulate, and on north-facing walls. Use climbers such as wisteria, or alternatively install a living wall system.



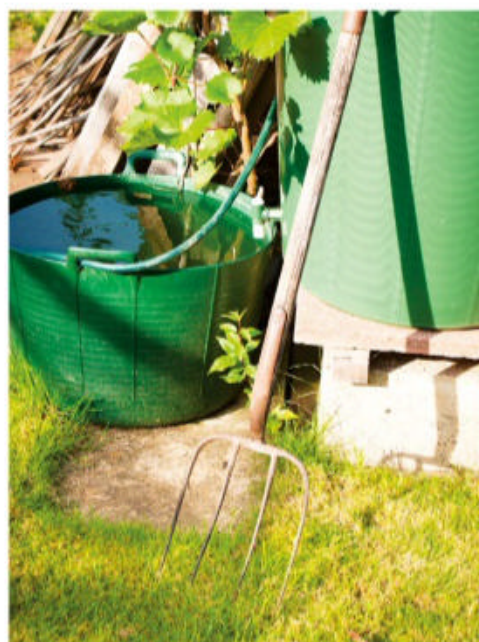
Ditch chemicals

Choose natural alternatives if possible. Get rid of greenfly with a blast of water from a hose, pick off caterpillars by hand, and control slugs with small dishes of beer placed near vulnerable plants. If you encourage hedgehogs into your garden, the slug population decreases anyway. Diseases such as blackspot can be prevented by spraying with an organic tonic.



Conserve water

Rather than watering little and often, which encourages roots to stay near the surface where they will dry out more quickly, water thoroughly once a week. This forces roots to go deeper to find moisture. Applying organic mulch around plant bases in spring helps lock in moisture too. Cut grass with the blades set higher to stop the soil drying out and keep grass greener for longer without using a sprinkler. Collect rainwater by fitting a water butt.



Go peat free

Extracting peat damages unique ecosystems, destroying natural habitats. Choose peat-free or reduced-peat potting compost containing coir. Give plants an extra nutrient boost by mixing in some well-rotted manure.



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Create a bee-friendly garden

Create a buzz and protect our pollinators in your plot this summer with nectar-rich plants

Transform your beds and borders into bee-friendly havens this year. You don't need acres of wildflower meadows – a patio or window box and some ordinary garden plants will do.

Bees need food, water and shelter to survive. They love plants that are rich in nectar (carbs) and pollen (protein). Happily, bee-friendly plants are trees, shrubs, herbs, fruit and veg and bulbs are easy to come by.

So why do we need to encourage bees? Bees are in

trouble – their numbers have plummeted, with 13 species already extinct, and 35 endangered, through habitat loss from urbanisation, intensive farming and pesticide use. Bees pollinate 75% of our crops, so we depend on them for our food. The good news is, our gardens are potential bee oases, so we can all do lots to help these fuzzy-footed pollinators.

Feed the bees

Keep bees supplied with food from spring to winter by growing the nectar and pollen-rich plants



A person with long brown hair, wearing a light yellow t-shirt and blue jeans, is seen from the back, holding a black hose and spraying water onto a large, dense bush of yellow roses. The water is creating a fine mist. In the background, there is a wooden fence and more greenery.

A jet of water can help wash away unwanted pests, avoiding the use of insecticides, which are harmful to bees

that bees love. In late winter, ivy and mahonia flowers provide pollen for overwintering queen bumblebees and carder bees. In spring, apple blossoms feed mason bees. Abelia, known as the bee bush, attracts honeybees in autumn.

Choose wisely

When you're plant shopping, look for the RHS 'Plants for Pollinators' symbol for bee-friendly blooms. Bees prefer single flowers, like daisies, to doubles, for easy access to nectar. But different bees have different mouth sizes, so plant other flower shapes, too, to ensure they are all catered for. Foxgloves are great, as is lavender, honeysuckle and sedum.

Mow less

Be more relaxed about your lawn. Let the grass grow a little longer from April to September, so bees can nest and feed in it. Avoid using lawn fertilisers, allowing lawn weeds like daisies,

speedwell and clover which attract bees, to self-seed, saving you money and prettifying up your patch.

Chuck out chemicals

Give bee-harming pesticides a swerve. If you spot aphids on your roses, remove them by hand or with a strong jet of water from a hose. Try organic methods for treating unwanted critters, like soft soap spray. Plant trees and shrubs with berries to encourage birds, so they eat the pests as well.

Give them shelter

Provide bee shelters in your garden: honeybees have their hives, but most bees are solitary and live in trees and hedges. Or make bee hotels with plastic bottles and bamboo canes. Grow woolly plants like *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ears) to provide material for nest-building species such as the carder bee.

A wooden bee hotel with a silver metal roof. The front of the hotel has several compartments with different types of nesting holes: some are small circular holes, some are larger rectangular slots, and one has a red door with horizontal slats. The hotel is surrounded by green foliage and purple flowers.

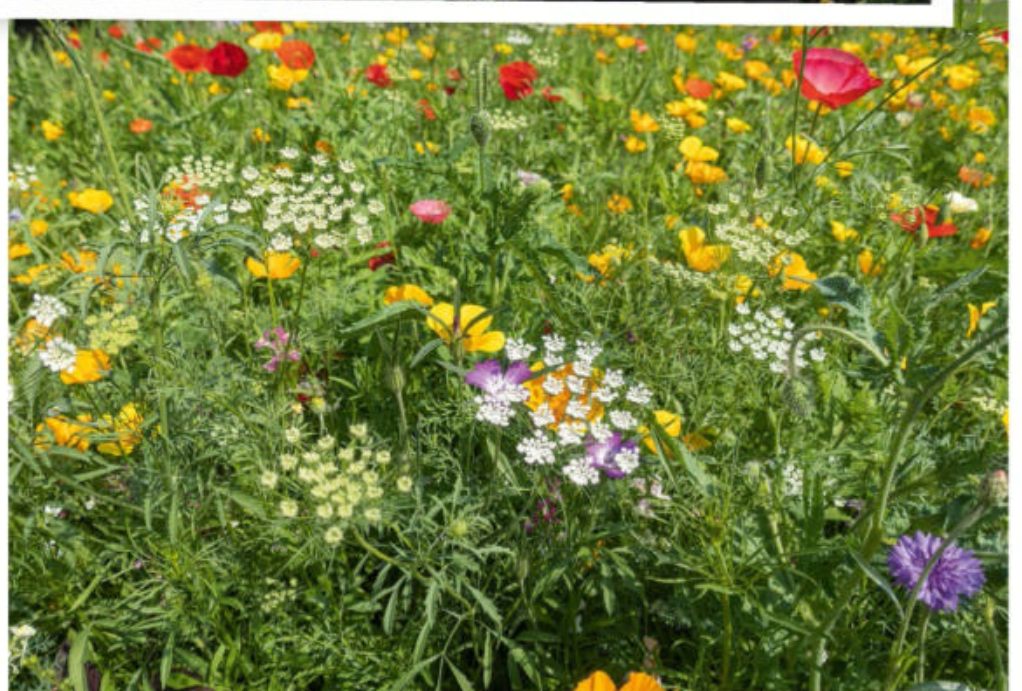
Build a bug hotel to provide shelter for solitary bees or invest in a ready-made design



Bumble bees will love rose of Sharon



Don't use harsh chemicals on plants. Use soap and water instead



Project

PLANT UP A SUMMER CONTAINER FOR BEES

Get buzzy and plant a container the pollinators will make a bee-line for!

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

MATERIALS

- A large pot with drainage holes
- Multipurpose compost
- Crocks for drainage

PLANTS

- 1 x *Salvia* 'Royal Bumble' AGM
- 4 x *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' AGM
- 4 x *Argyranthemum* 'Grandaisy Deep Red' or similar daisy-type plant
- 4 x trailing plants, such as *Anagallis monellii* 'Skylover' AGM

1 Find a sunny place for your pot. Plant it up in situ so you won't have to move it.

2 First, place some crocks over the hole in the bottom of the pot, then add the multipurpose compost.

3 Plant the salvia in the centre of the pot. Position the lavender plants at regular intervals around the salvia.

4 Insert the daisy plants in between the lavenders. Tuck the anagallis round the edge so they trail down and water everything in well.



Fill your pot with compost and get planting for bees!

HOW TO BUILD A POND

Attract wildlife, such as frogs, dragonflies and newts into your garden with a water feature

Once you've decided to build a pond in your garden, you'll engage in one of the most satisfying, beautiful and nature-friendly garden tasks that is possible to do. There are so many forms, shapes and types of ponds that you can create, so there's plenty of freedom to design the right one for your outdoor space. Have you got a formal or rectilinear garden? Then a geometrically shaped pond is probably best. Or do you have a more informal cottage-style plot? If so, a loose, curvy design will be ideal.

1 Choose the location

You'll need to make sure that the position of the pond is appropriate. Safety is certainly worth considering, particularly if you have young children, and this can be your guide to where you decide to place the pond in your garden – keeping it in eyesight of the house, for example. If it's tucked away in a corner away from sight, this can work to be part of the exploration of your garden, but often it's best placed so you can see it and enjoy it!

However, you definitely need to ensure the site is in full sun and not under any overhanging trees to avoid it being in the shade for too long and to limit any dead foliage and debris falling into the pond.

2 Select your pond type

It's important to plan what kind of lining you want to use: are you happy with a plastic shell that only needs to be sunk in the ground? Perhaps you want the durability of a concrete-lined pond, or maybe you want to make your own shape and line it with a plastic or butyl liner. The latter will give you the most flexibility.

3 Dig your hole

Ensure there are no utilities under where you want to build your pond. Use a non-toxic spray paint to draw the shape freehand, or use a rope or hosepipe. For a geometric pond, pegs and string will ensure straight lines. Cut your shape with a spade. If your design requires it, you may need to add shelves for marginal planting, so mark these out as a repeat of the shape about 30cm inside the larger outline. Dig the shelves first to a depth of around 30cm, then dig out the central area, between 45cm and 60cm deep. If you plan to finish the edges with stones or bricks, dig out a little extra soil around the edges.



4 *Line and fill*

Take the widest and longest measurements of your pond to work out an initial area, double it to take in the depth, then add 15-30cm so that your lining can be tucked under turf or under paving to ensure it's firmly held in place. Use an underlayer to protect the lining from being punctured. You can also line the hole with sand first, particularly if you have stony soil. Drape your liner into the hole carefully, pushing it into the shape of your pond. Keep it in position with weights around the edge as

you slowly fill your pond with water. Your pond will begin to take shape; help the process along by lifting the weights to allow the liner to shift under the weight of the water and fit into the nooks and crannies. When the pond is filled to your liking, you can cut off any excess liner, or pin it into the ground to maintain stability. A formal pond constructed with concrete or brick walls can also be lined with a flexible liner: just incorporate it into the construction and tuck it into the hard landscaping.



5 *Edge your pond*

Now that the pond is filled with water, take care of the edges and prepare for planting. Hide the edge of the lining by laying it under turf or hard landscaping. You can also create beach effects with pebbles and boulders. Add shelves in the water using old bricks or breeze blocks for placing pots of aquatic plants.



6 *Add your plants*

The most important varieties to start with are oxygenating plants, such as *Ceratophyllum demersum* (hornwort), which has dark green leaves and tiny flowers in summer. It thrives in full sun and part shade, and is free-floating, but can be secured with weights. *Aponogeton distachyos* (water hawthorn) has oval leaves and scented white flowers, and is perfect if your pond

is in shade for part of the day. *Carex elatea* 'Aurea' is a lovely sedge plant, and for colour try *Iris versicolor*, (right) which has wonderful bluish-purple flowers in summer. It is very hardy, surviving even when the water freezes in winter.

Ensure plants are in aquatic pots – square for formal ponds and circular in more natural designs – and have the right specialist soil. Don't use garden soil as this will make the water cloudy and encourage algae.



PLAN YOUR YEAR

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365 DAYS OF COLOUR

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365 days of COLOUR

Garden designer Tabi Jackson Gee shares the easy tricks garden designers use to get colour into gardens – all year round

Leave hydrangea flowerheads on to see you from summer to winter



With changing climates and lifestyles, many of us are expecting more from our gardens than ever before.

From wintry fireside gatherings to spring alfresco lunches, they need to work harder to look good all year round. With that comes a new set of gardening jobs to think about, as well as new plants to acquaint yourself with. But, never fear, we have rounded up a whole host of tips to make this stress free – and none should add much to your to-do list, either. This is about achieving year-round colour without having to break the bank or spend hours in the garden every day.

We are used to gardens being a summer thing, but we need to consider the rest of the year too. How do you design a garden that looks alive, and full with colour all year round? From evergreen shrubs to seasonal bulbs, here, we've outlined the many ways you can have a colourful garden from January to December.

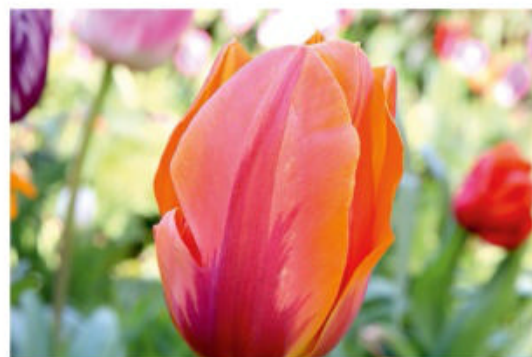
Getting started

When doing anything in your garden, it's best to start with the essentials. There are certain conditions that need to be observed and noted over time, in order for us to get the most out of our gardens. The key ones are: light, weather conditions, temperature and soil type (see *Know your soil type!*, p90).

Next, be realistic about how much maintenance you can (and want to) do. For your garden to thrive and with a succession of colour all through the year, you will probably need to put aside a couple of hours a week in spring/summer to take care of it. If you have less time, choose fewer, bigger plants that have long seasons of interest. When you've made a note of all of these

3 of the best... FOR SPRING

Easy to grow and sure to welcome in the new season beautifully



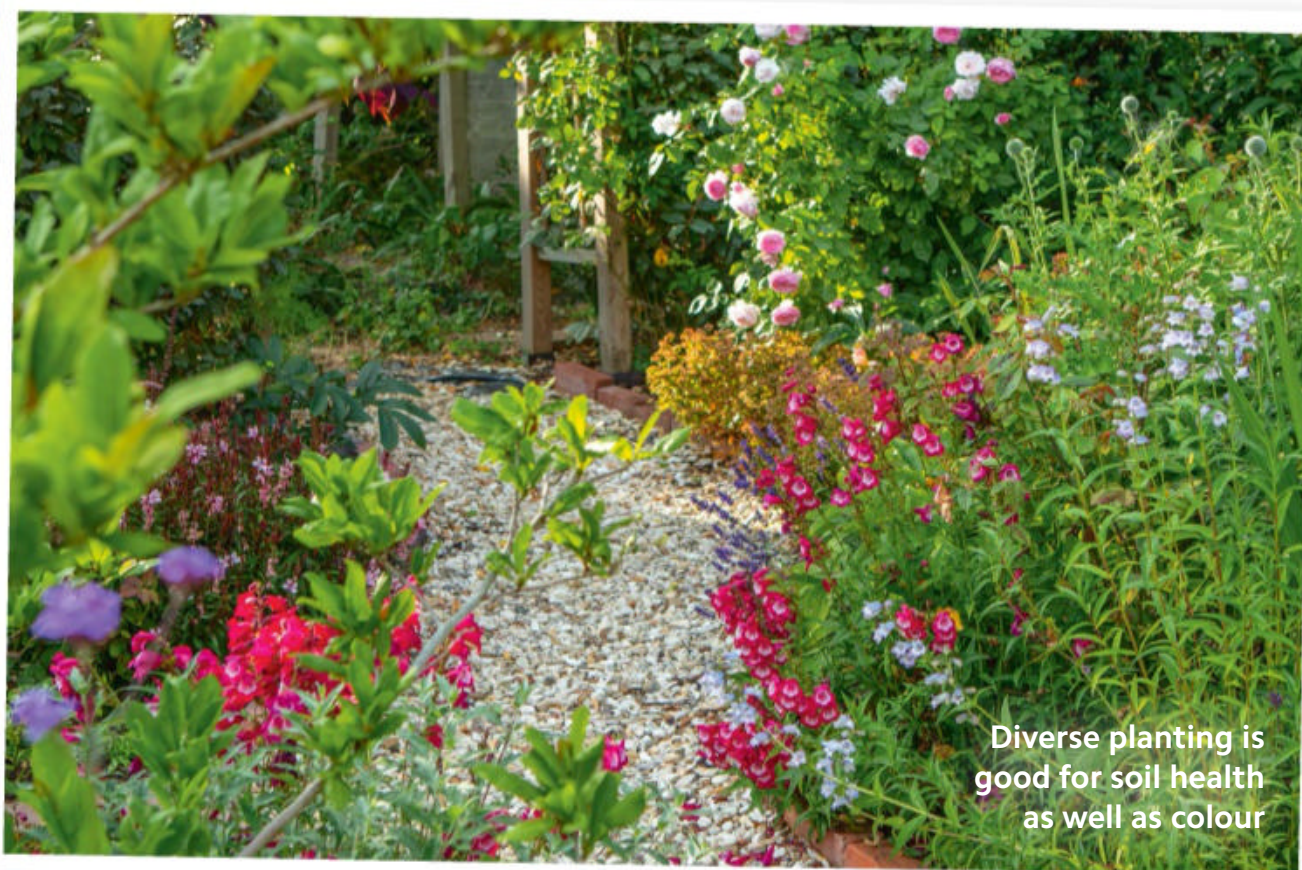
TULIPA 'PRINSES IRENE'



IRIS RETICULATA



HELLEBORUS x HYBRIDUS HARVINGTON RED



Diverse planting is good for soil health as well as colour

factors, it's time to start planning your garden. Take a piece of paper and jot down existing plants, where the sun goes throughout the day, where any wet patches or dry patches are – and get ready to start scheming.

How to plan

It may be useful to draw up a calendar when planning your year of colour, then you can start to plot into that calendar which plants you like and research when they will flower. If you are particularly fond of spring, for example, then maybe you want to go big on cherries and other spring blossoming trees, as well as bulbs such as narcissus, tulips and alliums.

You'll notice when you do this where some plants cross over, either when their foliage starts growing or flowers bloom. The key is to think about the succession of the plants in your garden – they will be appearing and flourishing and dying back over different periods, so try to make sure there are lots of overlapping plants grouped together.

Choosing your plants

Consider what style of planting you like. You don't have to stick to one style – cottage garden, Mediterranean or prairie planting, for instance – but if you have an idea of which direction you're going in creatively, then it will help you narrow down which plants to use.

The real key to choosing plants that will thrive in your garden ultimately lies in finding the right plants for the right place. Now that you've worked out where the shade, sun and wet and dry areas of your garden are, this will help you pick what plants will work where in your space.

When selecting plants a great tip that designers use is to work from the biggest

Cool down a colour scheme with silvery foliage plants, such as *Stachys byzantina* 'Silver Carpet'



to the smallest. For instance, begin by deciding which plants are going to form the structural elements of the garden. These are usually shrubs or trees that are either evergreen or have year-round interest, through blossom, winter berries or beautiful bark.

Next, it's the smaller seasonal plants that will create interest at different stages in the year, then finally the plants that are the supporting acts, such as clumps of hardy geraniums or evergreen grasses, which will be the reliable foundations of your scheme.

Creating a colour scheme

There are so many colours that you can squeeze into a garden. Often when I show clients a planting moodboard they're initially taken aback and think I've picked out too many different shades or clashing colours, but what you have to remember



Plants in containers can be switched in and out throughout the year

3 of the best... FOR SUMMER

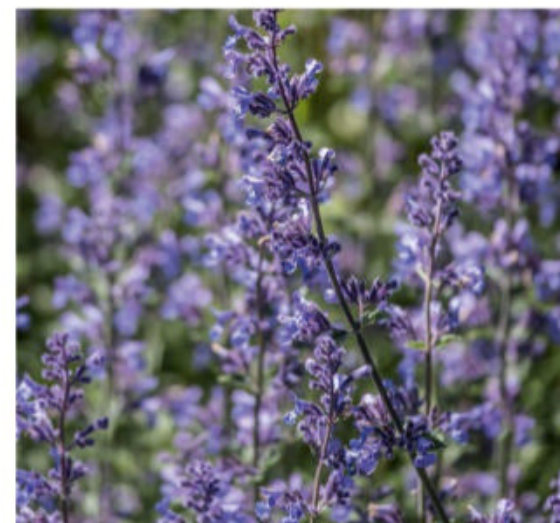
Go for prolific flowerers which will give you a long season of blooms



GERANIUM ORION



COSMOS



NEPETA RACEMOSA 'WALKER'S LOW'



is that most plants only flower for a few weeks at a time.

When choosing a colour scheme, it's also important to consider the texture, shape, height, form and movement of the planting. These are the less obvious features of our plants that can all contribute to year-round interest. From soft silky grasses to spiky eryngiums and neat mounds of pittosporum, these elements all add up to make a beautiful garden when carefully thought through.

Using evergreens

Evergreen shrubs, as well as evergreen spreading ground-cover plants, are particularly valuable for giving interest when there's not much else going on.

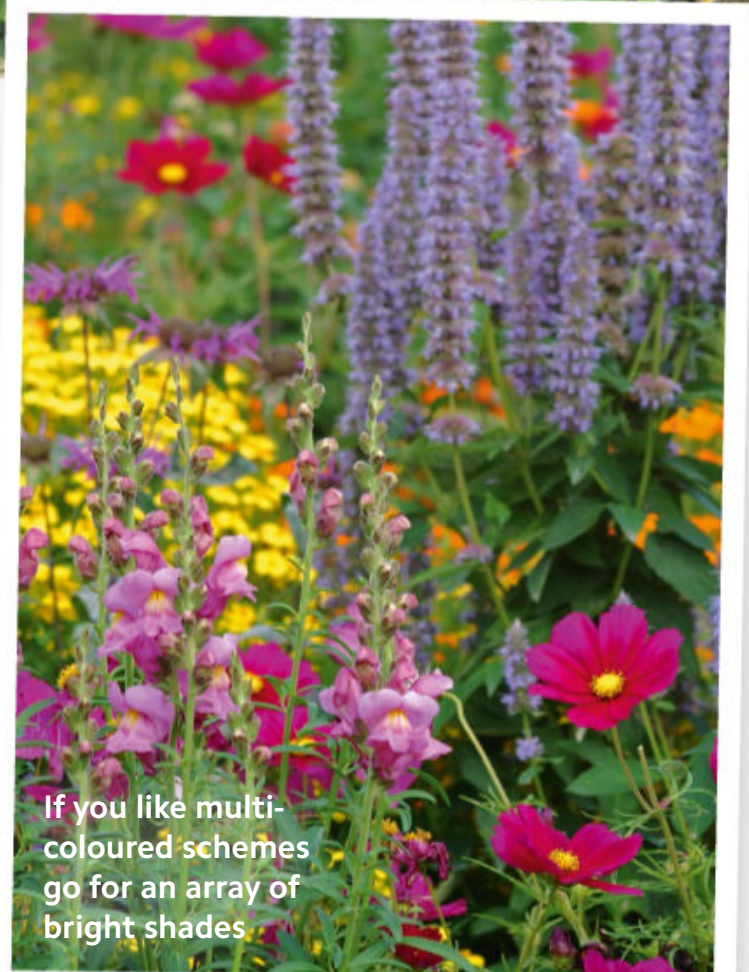
I often use pittosporum in gardens as it's a good alternative to box. Additionally, hebes, daphnes, choisyas and viburnum are all brilliant shrubs as they flower at

different times in the year and can grow to a good size in a relatively short period of time. Do check when buying shrubs that your chosen variety is actually evergreen. For instance, some viburnums are deciduous.

Long-flowering plants

Any scheme, of any size, should have reliable plants in it. Hardy geraniums spring to mind here, as do salvias, sanguisorbas, cosmos, erigeron and heucheras. All these plants are fairly tough and not especially fussy about their exact conditions, and they will flower for months at a time.

Allow yourself time to deadhead to keep plants flowering reliably. Choose two dates a year when you'll do a big day of general maintenance. Then do little bits here and there as time allows throughout the growing season.



If you like multi-coloured schemes go for an array of bright shades

Trees and shrubs are vital for creating a backbone for your planting scheme

3 of the best... FOR AUTUMN

The floral fun doesn't stop in autumn with these late bloomers



NERINE BOWDENII



EURYBIA x HERVEYI



HELIENIUM AUTUMNALE

Shrubby additions

Most shrubs only need pruning and mulching once a year. Just make sure you look up which variety you have as some shrubs enjoy being cut back on old wood, some on new wood, most directly after they've finished flowering.

One of the most popular shrubs is the hydrangea, whose large flowerheads start to form in spring and give way to months of colour as summer gets going. Leave the dried hydrangea blooms on over winter to protect new growth from frost, they also help maintain the shrub's shape.

Another winner is the cornus (dogwood) many varieties of which have deep red or orange stems that shine in a winter garden.

Bulb matters

No garden is complete without bulbs. They're the easiest plants to look after, requiring little attention after their initial

planting, and they bring colour to our gardens at a time when not much else is going on. What's more, there are so many colours to choose from here that you can go to town! Choosing bulbs that repeat or naturalise (tulips don't but most other bulbs do) will mean you can plant one year and then let the bulbs do their thing for years after.

Winter interest

Swaying ornamental grasses are one of my favourite plants to use in a scheme, and they require very little maintenance. Balance the softness of these with more architectural shaped plants like alliums or phlomis for a contrasted look that works almost all year round.

Leave allium seedheads on after they've gone over, they look stunning in a frost or in the late low sun of a winter's afternoon, sparkling in the landscape. Equally phlomis,



FEATURE TABI JACKSON GEE
PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY, FUTURECONTENTHUB.COM

Seedheads look stunning in a frost or in low sun during winter months

erygiums, sanguisorbas, sedums, Teasels and many more plants can be left in borders after they've 'gone over' to be enjoyed all through the winter. Some will retain some colour, others will fade but still give you shadows and shapes within your border that would otherwise be missing during the colder darker months. Just make sure you cut them back in early spring to allow space for new growth.

3 of the best... FOR WINTER

The winter garden can sparkle with foliage colour and bright stems



CORNUS ALBA 'SIBIRICA'



EDGEWORTHIA CHRYSANTHA



CROCUS SIEBERI SUBSP. SUBLIMIS 'TRICOLOR'



Choose acers for a backdrop of autumn colour

Top jobs for...

JANUARY

1 Spruce up your shrubs. Use sharp secateurs to prune shrubs and trees. Aim to cut just above any buds, while removing weak stems and dead stubs at their base to keep them healthy.



4 Garden centre plants of *Iris unguicularis* are now available. Choose a sunny, sheltered site. The soil should be dry and well draining, they love poor soil! Plant 20cm apart and water well until established.



2 Deadhead bedding plants. Pansies, violas, primulas and polyanthus will flower for much longer if you remove the dead heads regularly.

What to do WHEN

Your guide to the gardening jobs to be getting on with throughout the year

3 Show your garden tools some TLC. Clean them with a stiff bristle brush and sharpen secateurs and shears. Oil any moving parts to loosen them up.



5 Take a winter walk. Many parks and gardens will have spectacular snowdrop displays at the moment. So why not check out a local one and get some refreshing winter air as well as some serious inspiration for your own back garden.



6 Plant spring garlic in pots. Break each head into cloves and only plant the largest as these will produce bigger heads for harvesting. Pot the smaller ones up as garlic 'chives'. Fill 10cm pots with compost and bury one clove 5cm deep per pot and keep indoors until the soil warms up.

7 Bare soil can be an attractive litter tray for neighbourhood cats, so keep them off with twigs or a spray.

Now is the perfect time to start your spring garlic crop

Which snowdrops to look out for

- From January to February, the petals on the double variety 'Flore Pleno' overlap like a frothy tutu.
- Tall and elegant, 'Magnet' has single blooms from February to March, that dance in the breeze.
- A vigorous, spreading variety, 'S Arnott' has super-sized, honey-scented flowers that are a magnet for bees.

9 Draw up a garden calendar, outlining what's happening in your garden each month. It can be a simple list of when your plants will be in flower and other key jobs. It's useful for spotting gaps so you can plan what needs adding to keep your garden in flower all year.

8 Sow sweet peas for a display of long-lasting colour. Push seeds an inch deep in moist compost. Cover with newspaper for warmth.

10 Plant your lily bulbs now to enjoy vibrant floral displays in the springtime. Opt for the Jumbo Skyscraper variety for magnificent blooms over 6ft tall!

Top jobs for... FEBRUARY

1 Plant bulbs in the green. Woodland-loving plants including winter aconites, snowdrops and bluebells, grow better when planted in active growth just after flowering.



2 Cut a few winter-flowering shrubs, such as Daphne and honeysuckle, for indoor scent. Bashing out the woody tips of stems allows them to take up more water.



FEATURE TERESA CONWAY PHOTOGRAPHS ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

3 Give your house a facelift with a hanging basket. Use a coir based liner and newspaper for insulation. Plant bright cyclamen, which will flower happily from September to March, along with pretty pansies. Finish with ivy.



4 While the garden is dormant, you can relocate plants. Water the plant well and prepare the new hole. Dig out with as much of the surrounding rootball as possible. Place in its new hole and fill in, firming well.



5 Lift and divide spring bulbs while they still have leaves. When the flowers of snowdrops, daffodils and muscari have faded, dig up the clump, ease the plants apart and replant in new positions.



6 Weed out weeds. If it's a mild day, spend 10 minutes pulling them up. Keeping on top of weeds now means you'll be one step ahead when the garden ramps into growth.



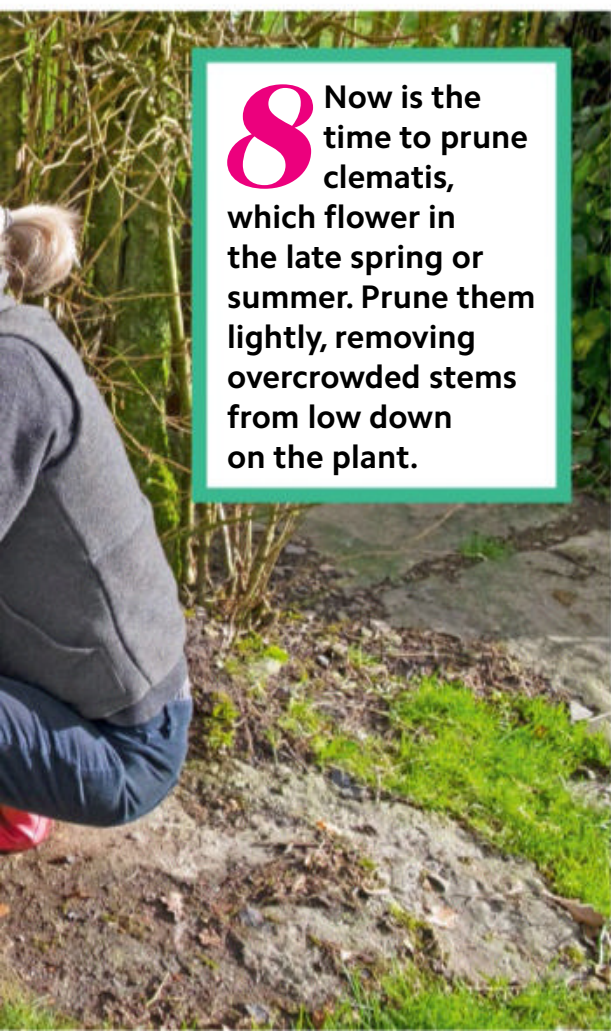
How to super-charge your soil

- An organic soil improver feeds the soil with a cocktail of nutrients to boost plant growth (nitrogen, phosphate and potash) and encourages soil life that plants depend on, from beneficial bacteria to earthworms. It improves structure too, breaking up heavy soil to provide better aeration and drainage, and bulking up light, sandy soil to retain moisture and nutrients.



7 Help garden birds survive through winter by making a high-calorie fat ball. Mix bird seed, sunflower seeds and peanut granules with softened lard or suet. Squish the mix into the gaps in pine cone scales, tie to a branch and watch the birds come.

8 Now is the time to prune clematis, which flower in the late spring or summer. Prune them lightly, removing overcrowded stems from low down on the plant.



9 Don't disturb compost right now. Small mammals, frogs and insects all hibernate in compost over winter. To avoid harming them, ensure you don't turn your compost heap until April.

10 Help hungry hedgehogs in mild weather. Hedgehogs emerge from hibernation early so leave water and meaty dog food out for them overnight. Remove any leftovers in the morning to deter flies.



Top jobs for... **MARCH**

1 Now is the last chance to finish pruning deciduous trees and shrubs. Wait until summer to prune cherries (prunus species) as these can be susceptible to silver-leaf disease if pruned too early.



4 Plant summer-flowering bulbs like lily, crocosmia, nerine and gladioli (shown) in a sunny, sheltered spot.



2 Weed and feed your lawn. If rain doesn't fall within two days, water the feed in. Use a formula that includes mosskiller if it's a problem.



3 Snip off spent flowerheads from daffodils in order to divert energy into the bulbs for next year's bright display.

5 Trim deciduous grasses before the new leaves emerge. *Miscanthus sinensis* (shown) can be cut back from mid March to April.



6 Whether you bought it bare-root or as a containerised plant, this is the perfect time to get a rose established in a pot. Most roses are suitable, including shrub, climbers, patio and ground cover as long as the pot is at least 45cm in diameter. Use a John Innes No3 compost and add 20% well-rotted manure or compost. Apply mycorrhizal fungi before planting to encourage root growth.



7 Lift and divide overgrown clumps of perennials. Use a spade to cut into pieces and discard bare centre sections. Replant outer sections in the ground then add a layer of compost mulch to retain water and suppress weeds.

Plan now to ensure you have a lovely display of roses in the summer



3 seeds to sow in March

● **NIGELLA** You can sow under cover in March and September, or if you prefer to direct sow then do it in April and August. They'll be ready for harvest (above) through July, August and September.

● **ZINNIA** If you prefer to direct sow instead of starting them off inside you can with these, but do wait for risk of the last frost to have passed. They love a sunny spot so sow thinly into finely raked, moist and warm soil.

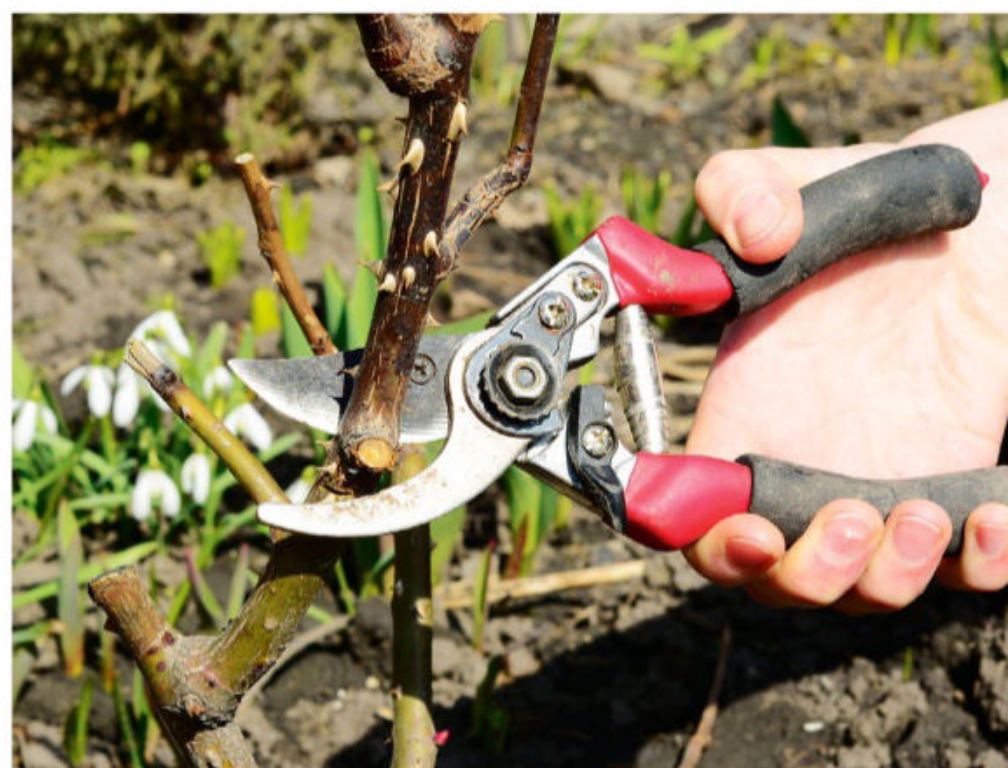
● **DELPHINIUM** If you direct sow in May, June and July they won't bloom until June, July or August next year. So it's worth adding them into your sowing plan this month.



9 Pot up dahlia tubers into 23cm pots. Place on a warm windowsill and use the first shoots to make cuttings. Cut at the base when they reach 7.5cm tall and place around a large pot of compost. The parent can also be planted in May after the last frost.



8 Mulch around the base of your shrubs using a thick layer of composted bark. This will help keep weeds at bay and retain moisture.

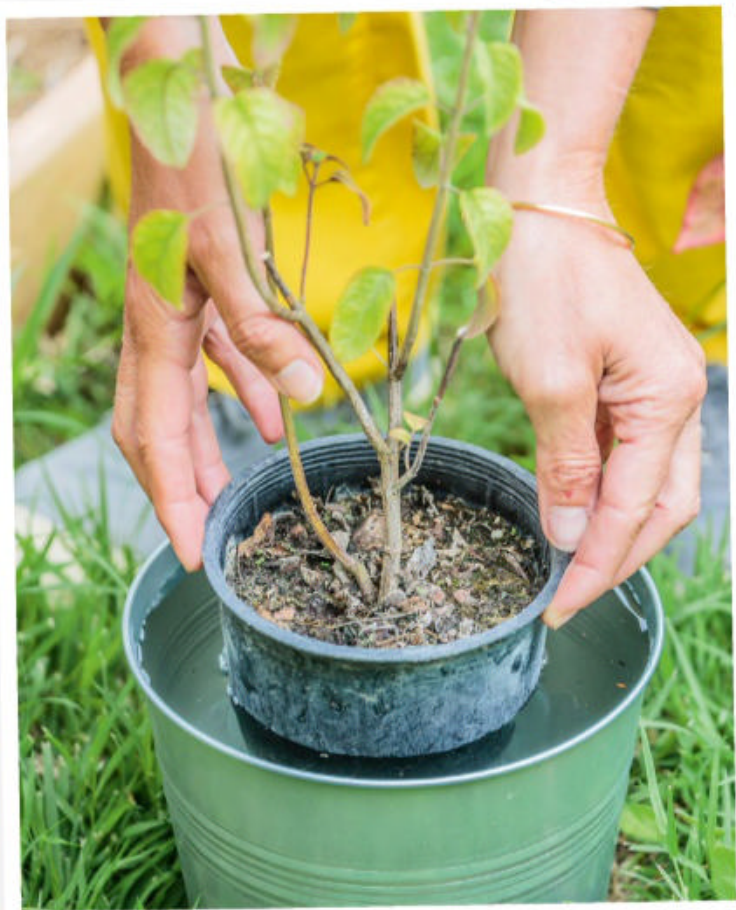


10 Take stock of your borders, plant out new perennials and cut out dead stems of dormant plants. It's a good time for a spring tidy up!

Top jobs for...

APRIL

1 Start to increase watering of houseplants and feed them once a week with a proprietary feed. Mist regularly with tepid water.



2 Soak new perennials and shrubs before planting to ensure the roots are fully hydrated. Submerge the pots in a bucket of water for about 20 minutes. Adding mycorrhizal root powder can also help with root health.

3 Clear weeds in paths and between paving slabs using a long-handled brush with a scraper attachment. A pressure washer is another option depending on your paving.



4 Bedding should be flowering well still. To keep it in good health, deadhead regularly so the plants put more energy into new buds.



5 We're all familiar with spring bulbs, but it's time to start thinking about the beautiful summer varieties. Order agapanthus (pictured), camassia, anemones and freesias.





**3 seeds
to sow in
April**

● **SUNFLOWERS** You can sow them indoors or outdoors in April, though do wait for the last frost to pass before you do. They'll flower (above) from July to September.

● **CALENDULA** Sow between now and the end of May – if the last frost in your area has happened then you can sow directly into your garden, or start them off inside to be safe. They will flower from June until the first frost of autumn.

● **ESCHSCHOLZIA** They can be sown directly outside, but as always, check the weather first. The last month to sow is May, and they will flower from June through to September.



6 Sow runner bean seeds into pots under cover to get a head start.



7 Make the most of those April showers and install a water butt if you don't have one already, and start collecting rainwater in preparation for the summer.



8 Don't stop feeding garden birds just because spring is here. Although it is easier for them to find food, in the busy breeding season they'll need all the help they can get!



9 Plant up flower pouches using small plants and pinch them out to encourage side shoots. Let them establish in a frost-free spot such as a sunny porch.



10 If you don't have much space for veg in your garden, why not try courgettes in a pot? The 'Black Hawk' variety has a climbing habit that makes it great trained up a wall or trellis.

Top jobs for...

MAY

1 Check long grass for wildlife before strimming. And don't use hedge trimmers during the bird nesting season (March to August).



4 Mound up the earth around your potato plants regularly as the foliage grows, keeping any tubers well covered.



2 Once all risk of frost has passed, plant out your colourful summer bedding and pot up hanging baskets for guaranteed summer-long colour.



3 Feed and cut your lawn regularly and make sure it is well watered during dry spells. Reseed bare patches when they appear.



5 Prune spring-flowering shrubs, cutting the oldest stems right back to the base using loppers. This will help to encourage fresh growth for next year.

6 Grow lilies and dahlias in pots and along borders.



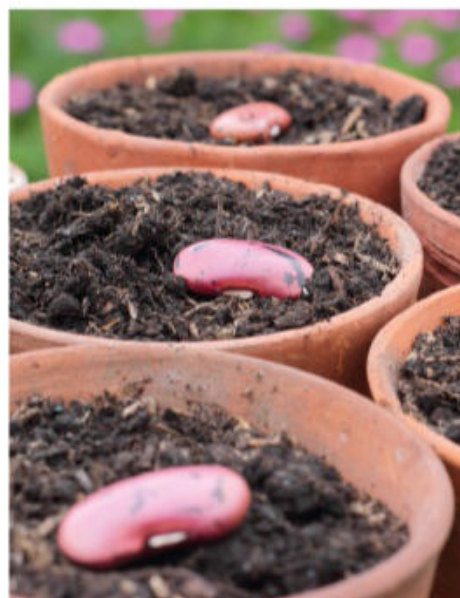
3 flowers to sow in May

- **SUNFLOWERS** Always a favourite with children, the sunflower is a fabulous plant to sow this month. 'Titan' will give you super-sized blooms of up to 50cm in diameter and they'll grow up to 3.5m.
- **ECHINACEA** To create interest you need a variety of shapes and colours, and this is where echinacea comes in. Sow them before the end of June and plant them out in full sun or partial shade.
- **SCABIOUS** This prolific beauty comes in shades of blue, mauve, rose and salmon. Sow now until the end of June and they'll bloom until the frosts. Cut spent flower heads for a second flush.



7 Keep on top of weeding, checking the beds regularly for any new growth.

9 Runner beans can be sown or planted this month into a large pot with a tall wigwam of canes. Plant out tomatoes and courgettes into grow-bags and place them in a sunny, sheltered position.



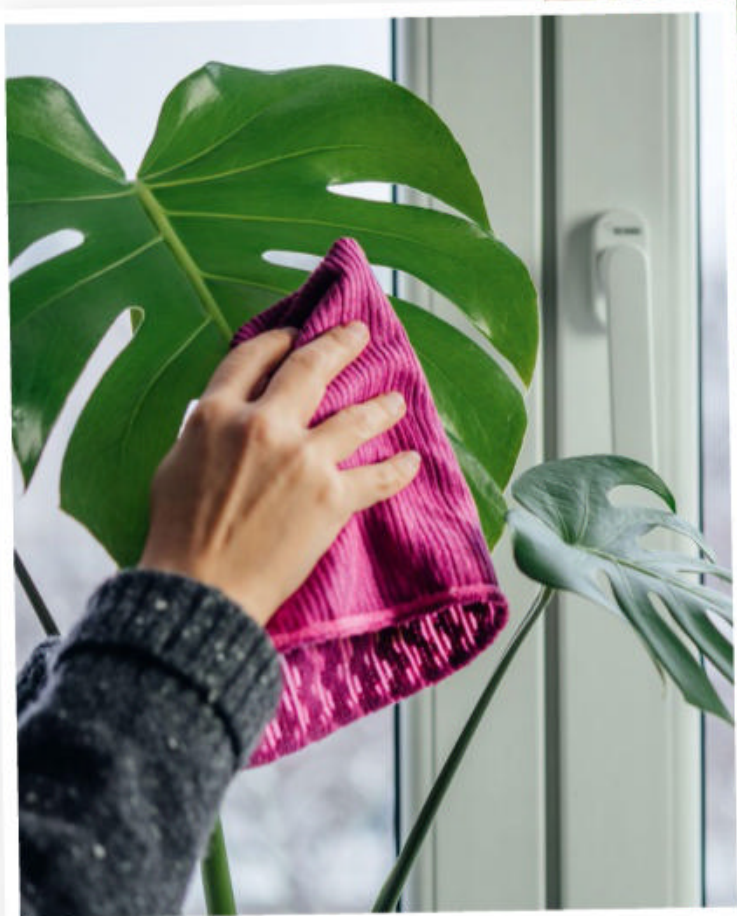
8 Check new growth on plants for any signs of aphids. If you can see some, get rid of them by hosing off or rubbing with your finger.



10 Take softwood cuttings of perennials now and they may even give you a second flush of colour later in the year.

Top jobs for... **JUNE**

1 Stake perennials, such as dahlias, to help support new growth. Doing so means they won't collapse in windy conditions.



2 Keep indoor plants free of pests by wiping leaves with a damp cloth. In a worst-case scenario use a houseplant bug killer.

3 Now the weather is warmer, slugs and snails are about. Choose natural ways of dealing with them, instead of killing them. Go on a torch-lit hunt to protect plants.



4 Water cacti and succulents when the compost is dry. Place citrus trees, cymbidiums and other houseplants outdoors in the sun for a summer holiday.



3 flowers to sow in June

- **FOXGLOVE** A stunning choice, it produces tall spikes with classic tiers of flowers that bees love. If you sow now, it will bloom from May to July next year.
- **NASTURTIUM** Ideal for borders and containers, you can direct-sow in June into well-drained soil in a sunny position, and it will flower until the end of October.
- **CANDY TUFT** This pretty flower (above) looks fabulous in borders as a companion to larger varieties. Plant in full sun and keep the soil moist. Sow direct in the ground if the soil is warm enough. It will flower until autumn.

5 Deadhead perennials such as catmint, geum, astrantia and scabious (shown) before seed sets for a second flush. Trim back faded hardy geraniums hard.



6 Drape netting over currants and cherries to keep the birds off. Protect strawberries from birds before the fruits colour.



7 Evergreen box hedging can be pruned in early June to reveal new growth and retain a neat shape. Trimming can be done any time until August.



8 Deadhead rose heads with a short stem once a week to just above a leaf joint or emerging side shoot.



9 The drier and warmer days of June are an ideal time to repair and preserve structures. Sand down and repaint furniture and wash away any mud and algae that has grown under patio pots.



10 Sow biennials for next year, such as sweet William, wallflowers, honesty, foxgloves, forget-me-nots and Canterbury bells.

Top jobs for...

JULY

1 Tomatoes are susceptible to blossom-end rot or split skins, especially if watering is inconsistent. Water regularly to keep compost evenly moist.



3 Trim faded herbs back – and as new growth appears, cut, chop up and freeze into ice cubes. Add a cube or two to stews and casseroles when required.



2 Tomato feed contains potash, an excellent boost to all fruiting trees, perennials and bedding plants, so use regularly to encourage flowers and fruit.



4 Once strawberry plants have finished fruiting, train runners into pots to produce new plants. Once rooted, sever from the parent plant and pot up ready for next year.



5 If you have a pond, make sure you have a fountain or pump to increase oxygen levels. This will stop the water becoming stagnant. Clean the pump and filter from time to time.

6 Clip shoots on evergreen shrubs and hedges. Try to taper the sides of the hedge so that light reaches the lower growth, to avoid bare patches appearing at the base.



7 Don't neglect indoor plants, which will need more watering as the weather gets warmer.



Flowers to sow in July

- **FORGET-ME-NOTS**, with their delicate yet bright blue flowers, may be small but that doesn't stop them from being positively charming. You can plant the seeds now – this perennial favourite particularly likes moist soil – to enjoy the pretty blooms next spring.
- **DELPHINIUM**'s showy spikes make ideal additions to the back of billowing borders as they can reach over 6ft tall. Offering clustered blooms in white, blue, pink and indigo, they make some of the best cutting garden flowers. You may even have some in your garden right now – their peak blooming season is June-July.

9 Now is the best time to prune cherry and plum trees to cut the risk of silver leaf disease. Trained apples and pears also require an annual prune to restrict growth and give developing fruits light.



8 Give bedding plants a good weekly soaking – once a week is better than little and often, which encourages surface rooting.

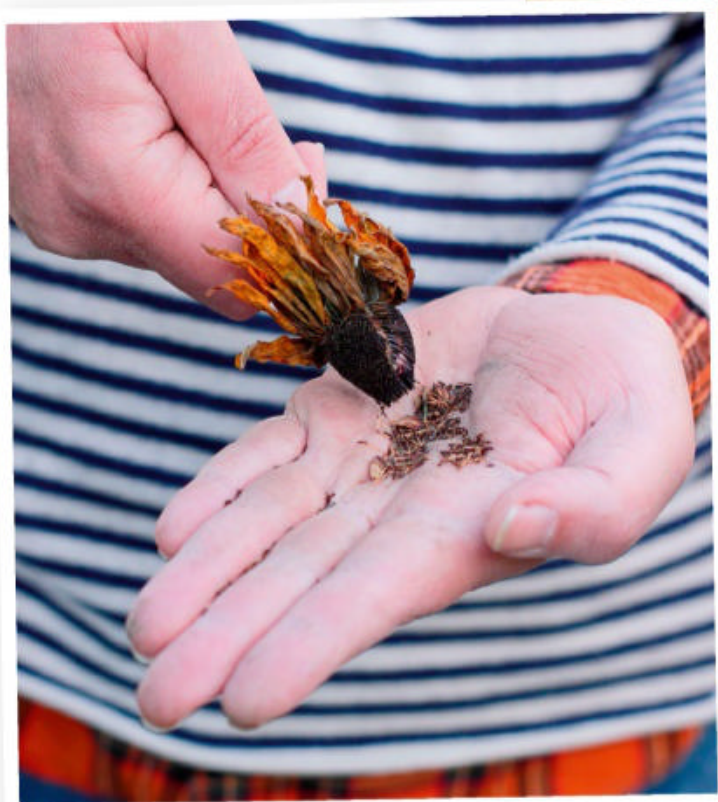


10 Tie climbers into their supports to prevent loose stems becoming damaged. Encouraging stems to grow horizontally will help to promote more flowers.

Top jobs for...

AUGUST

1 Pots are a wonderful way of adding pops of colour to the garden. Pot up dahlias, gaillardias, begonias and salvias which will flower well into autumn.



2 Collect seeds from hardy annuals and biennials. The best time to do it is when the seed heads or pods have become dried, brittle and usually brown or red. Gather them on a dry day, ideally after a run of rain-free days, as unless they are completely dry when stored they will go mouldy.

3 Hardy geraniums can become straggly, so use shears to keep them in shape after flowering. Deadhead penstemons and other perennials to encourage further blooms.



4 Continuing to feed and provide water for garden birds and wildlife is important at all times of the year, so don't forget to include it on your list of August jobs.



5 One of the best garden water-saving tips is to install a water butt before autumn and winter rains arrive. Install on downpipes from the house, garage or greenhouse.

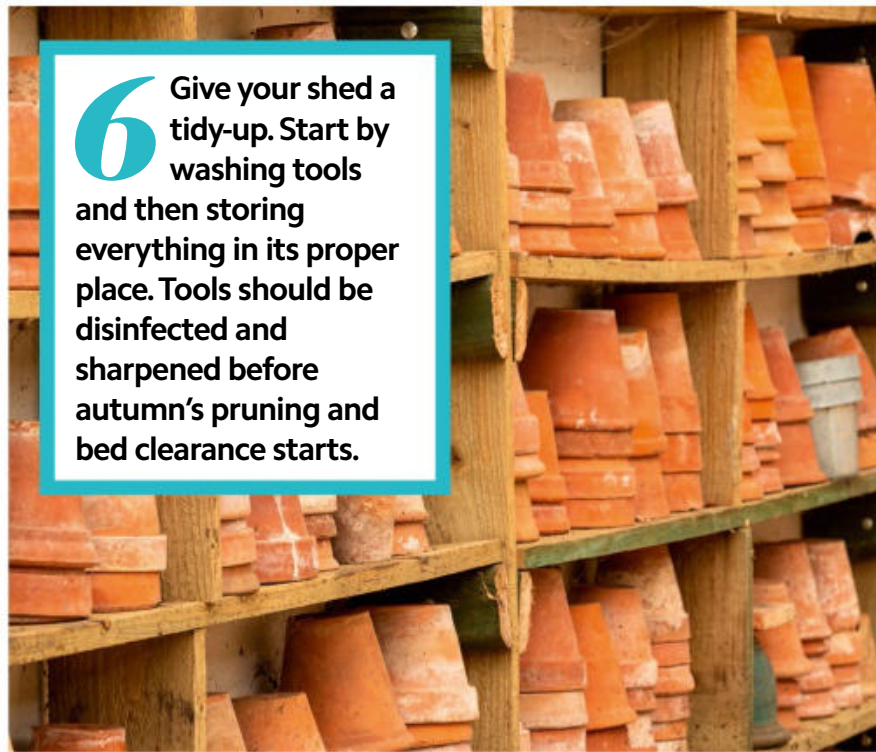


Flowers to sow in August

● **CORNFLOWERS** are easy to grow and are a lovely choice for cottage gardens. Their seeds are either sown now or next spring, though those that go in the ground this year may flower before those that are started the next, giving you a longer succession of flowers.

● **POPPIES** are ideal for adding early summer drama. They thrive in a sunny or partially shaded position, and come in a range of shades, from brilliant scarlet to dusty purple. Some are single-petalled while others are frilly pom-poms, so there is a poppy out there to suit your space and needs.

6 Give your shed a tidy-up. Start by washing tools and then storing everything in its proper place. Tools should be disinfected and sharpened before autumn's pruning and bed clearance starts.



7 Increase your stock and take cuttings of tender perennials such as pelargoniums before you lift and store them in a frost-free greenhouse over winter.

8 If you're going away, group pots together in a sheltered, shady spot to reduce moisture loss. Give them a good soaking before you leave.



10 Weeds can feel like unwanted guests at the best of times. Spend an afternoon digging up weeds and pulling them up by the root.



9 Keep hard surfaces clear of debris such as dead leaves and soil that washes out of pots and beds by the rain. Garden detritus can harbour pests and disease, so take time to sweep it up.



Top jobs for... **SEPTEMBER**

1 Sow biennials (these are plants that are sown this year and flower the next) they include foxgloves, sweet rocket, wallflowers and honesty.



3 While conditions are still good, plant some evergreens to add structure to the garden. Holly and skimmia provide winter interest.



2 Plant bulbs – as well as being easy to plant, spring-flowering bulbs are versatile, happy in garden borders and pots, while dwarf varieties work well in baskets, rockeries and the lawn.



4 Add winter bedding. This can be ordered and planted now. Go for cyclamen, winter pansies and primulas. Get them in the ground early for the best results.



5 Plant out garlic and autumn-planting shallots so they can start into growth before the soil cools any more.

6 Freshen up your containers by adding some late bloomers such as chrysanthemums and asters. You'll be surprised how long their flowers will last into autumn.



7 Make sure you have picked all your summer veg so it doesn't go to waste. Store or preserve them!

Three seeds to sow

- **VIOLAS** are a spring bedding stalwart. Smaller and less blowsy than pansies, they are less likely to have their petals damaged by winter weather and will happily hunker down and sit out the worst of the weather before springing back to life when conditions improve.
- **POACHED EGG PLANTS** like full sun and are hardy, so sow them now in soil that has been cleared of weeds and stones, raked until it is fine and crumbly and watered.
- **CALIFORNIA POPPIES** Also known as *Eschscholzia californica*, are cheery annuals that spread pops of colour wherever they are sown.

9 Mulch your plants with straw or bark which will be excellent for protecting them in winter and will help feed the soil at the same time.



8 Pick fruit. It's time to harvest ripe apples and pears. Twist the fruit gently in your hands and if it's ready it should come away with ease.



10 Collect seeds from your last tomato plants. Scoop out the fleshy inside and leave in water for a few days. Then store in an envelope ready for planting next year.

Top jobs for... OCTOBER

1 Build a bug hotel. Use wood offcuts or simply stack shelves and old bricks. Fill sections with bamboo tubes, pine cones, straw and leaves. In fact most natural material foraged from your garden will work well. Painting it in a bright colour will make it a fun feature, too.



2 Force bulbs indoors. Several varieties, including hyacinths, amaryllis (or *Hippeastrum*) and Narcissus 'Paper White' are all suitable and if started now should be in flower for Christmas, giving you colour several weeks before any garden bulbs have started to bloom.

3 Look after your roses by deadheading flowers and remove and bin any leaves that have black spot, a common fungal disease. Leave some dead flowers to form hips.



4 Harvest any winter squashes now before there is any risk of frosts. Cut them with a length of stalk attached and place in a sunny, frost-free spot.



5 Now is a good time to plant tulip bulbs at a depth of 2-3 times the height of the bulb, with their pointed end upwards. Cover with compost and water well.





6 Clean your tools to keep them in good condition. If the mud is caked on, dunk them in warm, soapy water and wipe them down with an old towel or cloth. Rub oil (any type will do) onto the metal blades before storing them in a dry shelter for the rest of winter.

7 Get ahead for next year. Order vegetable seeds and fruit plants. The earlier the better to guarantee that you get your pick of the best varieties.



Three seeds to sow

- **CALENDULA** For a long flowering season, sow them now, then again in spring in well-prepared soil in a sunny spot. Thin the seedlings if they are growing too thickly.
- **AQUILEGIA** For the best results, sow them in trays of seed compost and germinate on a light, warm windowsill. If they fail to sprout, pop the seed tray in the fridge for two to three weeks, as this 'tricks' the seeds into thinking they have been through winter, so they germinate when they are back at room temperature.
- **POPPIES** Simply create a seedbed by clearing soil of weeds, stones and debris then raking until you are left with a light, crumbly texture. Water the area and scatter the seeds. If seedlings emerge too close, thin them out to give them enough light.



8 Order and plant new bare root trees and shrubs now, making sure you prepare your beds well. You should get them in the ground as soon as possible after they arrive.



9 Protect your pots. If your garden is prone to puddles, now is the time to put your patio pots on 'feet' to ensure they don't become waterlogged.

10 Grow winter salad. If there's not much in the way of crops going on in your garden, sow some inside on your windowsills. Try cut-and-come-again salad leaves or herbs.

Top jobs for... NOVEMBER



2 Clear your beds and pots of any plants that are dead and rake over with new soil ready for planting your spring displays.

1 Check your plants for pests and other signs of disease and treat them if needed with an appropriate natural pest remedy.



3 Now is the time to get your tulip bulbs in the ground. Any earlier and they will be more prone to fungal disease; leave it any later and it will be too cold!



4 For blossom in a small garden next spring pot up the compact shrub *Prunus incisa* 'Kojonoma'. It will grow happily in a container.



5 New bare-root trees and shrubs can go in the ground before the frost sets in.

Top jobs for... DECEMBER



1 Plant deciduous scented winter shrubs, such as witch hazel and winter honeysuckle (left), in your front garden, or where you'll see or smell them from the house.

The spider-like flowers of witch hazel add winter interest



2 Winterproof your garden and move pots away from areas that are susceptible to wind. Put pot feet under containers if you haven't done so to stop the soil from freezing. Buy covers for outdoor taps, to prevent them from freezing over.

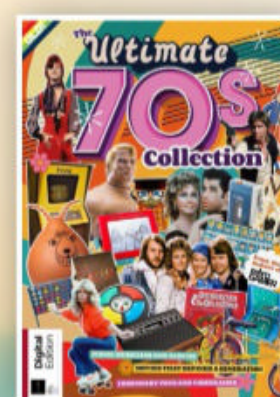
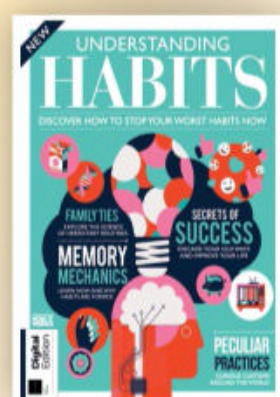
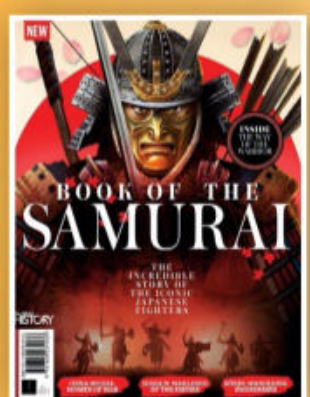
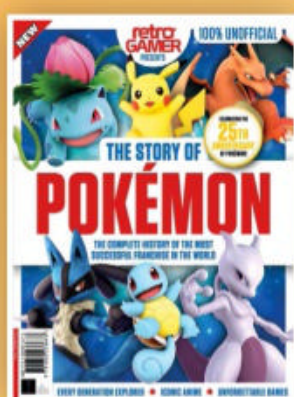
3 Begin to plan next year's crop rotation. Potato plants can go in your brassica spot, peas and broad beans can replace onions, and swap tomatoes for onion and garlic. This will boost soil fertility and help keep disease at bay.



4 Attach a colourful Christmas wreath to your front door and add some sparkle by popping welcoming solar tea lights on a windowsill facing the street.

5 Hellebores flower any time from now until late spring, so keep them healthy by removing old foliage that can make them more susceptible to fungal disease.





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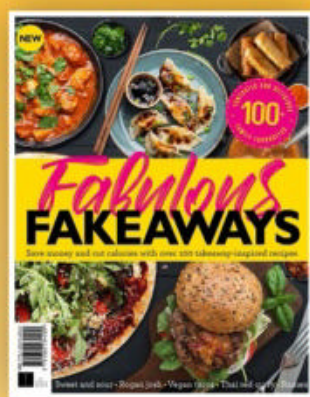
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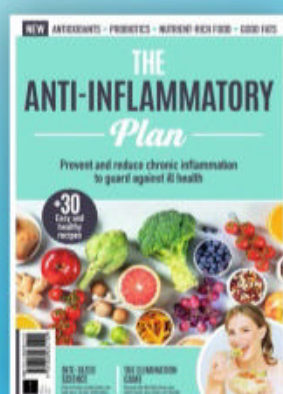
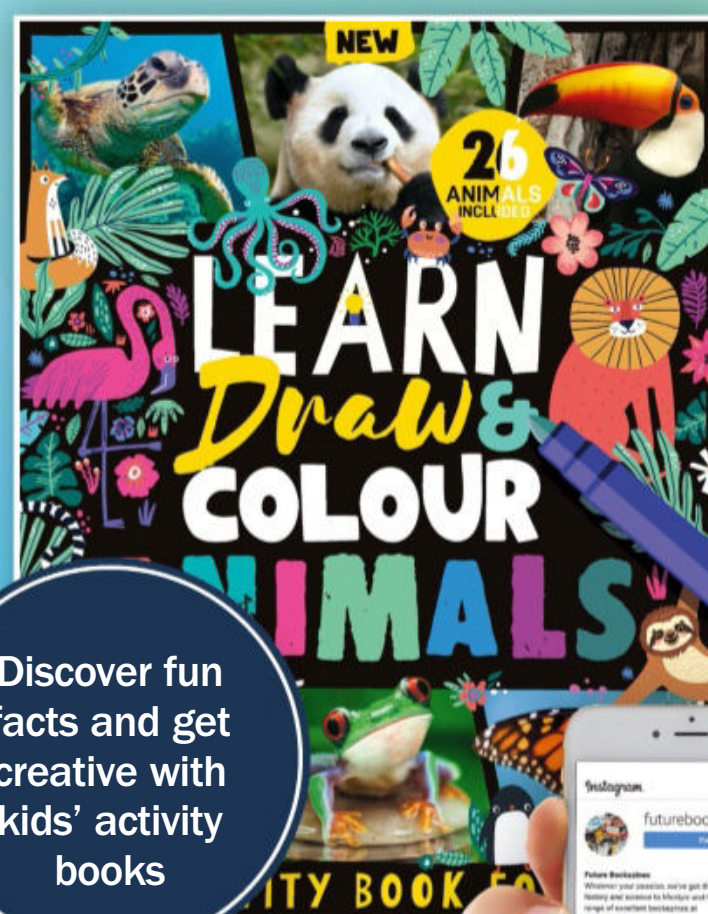
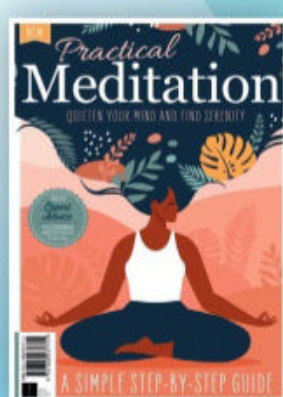


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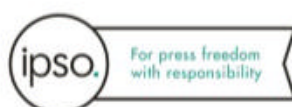


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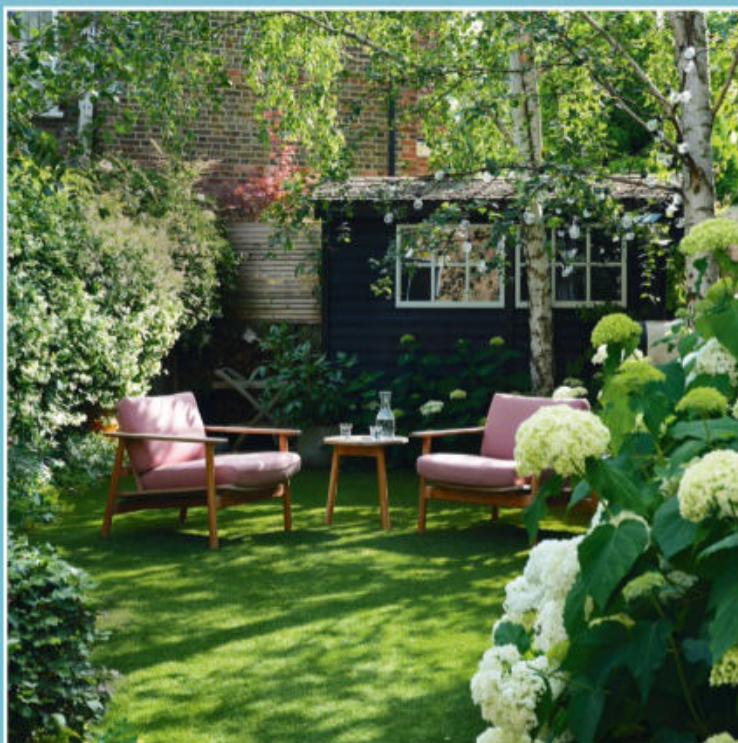
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Gardening

MADE SIMPLE



GETTING STARTED
Beginner-friendly tips & tricks
to teach you the basics



PROJECTS & GUIDES
Expert advice to help make
the most of your space



PLAN YOUR YEAR
How to look after your garden
throughout the seasons

