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World magazine
GUIDE

175
easy
ideas

Small Space Gardening

Inspiring ways to make the most of your plot



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Welcome...

Whether you've got a tiny back garden, courtyard, balcony, or even just a doorstep, there's always the opportunity to grow things, create a garden and transform your space. And this special edition from *BBC Gardeners' World Magazine*, is just the thing help you along the way.

Whether you're looking for clever ideas to make your plot feel bigger or to create a bit of privacy, or you want to be inspired with simple projects or ideas for beautiful containers, you'll find it all here. We've also got plenty of ways for you to grow your own crops, so you can enjoy a fresh, tasty harvest from even the smallest space.

So, what are you waiting for? Think big for your small space to create a green and bountiful oasis for all the family.

Kevin

Kevin Smith, Editor,
BBC Gardeners' World Magazine

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Cover image
Antony Watkins and
Christopher Hutchings'
garden, west London,
by Paul Debois



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To all the plants and gardening techniques used throughout





Small garden design

Good design is vital in a small space – every feature and plant has to add value. Whatever space you have, however small, a well-thought out layout can make a huge difference to how big it feels. We've got ideas for every style of garden, from small city courtyards to wildlife gardens. And some easy design solutions that will help add impact to your space, from space-saving seats to colours and features that will make it seem bigger.

Wildlife haven

Even a small garden can be a home for a variety of wildlife. Include a wide mix of plants, from nectar-rich flowers to climbers, shrubs and trees. Leave a part of the space more relaxed where bundles of twigs or piles of logs will make excellent shelters, especially in winter. Plant plenty of nectar-rich flowers for pollinating insects and include some that form seedheads to give structure to the winter garden and food for birds. Shrubs and a hedge will provide shelter and food for a range of insects, birds and small mammals.





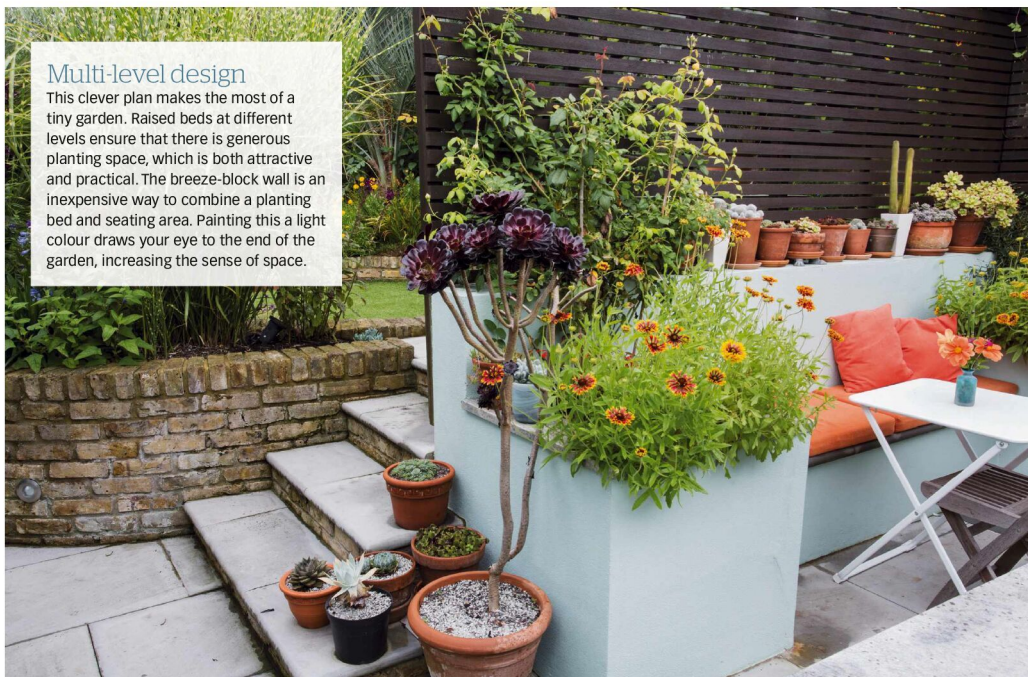
Clean green space

An expanse of green can help to create a clean, uncluttered look and makes the garden appear larger. Here, the curved shape gives an informal feel. In a tiny or shady garden, though, a lawn can be hard work for little gain – consider using artificial grass or a planted 'lawn' of thyme or chamomile for green without the maintenance (see p124).



Multi-level design

This clever plan makes the most of a tiny garden. Raised beds at different levels ensure that there is generous planting space, which is both attractive and practical. The breeze-block wall is an inexpensive way to combine a planting bed and seating area. Painting this a light colour draws your eye to the end of the garden, increasing the sense of space.





Contemporary terrace

An uncluttered terrace creates a practical, stylish space for entertaining in this modern town garden. It is softened by climbers and a generous expanse of planting. A reflective pool adds interest and light. Stick to one type of paving for a clean look. Slatted horizontal fencing tricks the eye into believing a small garden is wider than it is, while slatted timber furniture complements the fencing. The shade sail provides some privacy.



Fully functional

Many gardeners feel they don't have space to grow fruit and veg as well as ornamental plants, and to have enough room for sitting and playing. This design shows that by dividing the space into distinct areas you can achieve a smart, have-it-all garden. The geometric shape of the lawn mirrors the design of the raised beds, creating a strong framework for the centre of the garden. A line of timber-edged raised beds provides plenty of space for growing fruit and veg. For best results, position them in the lightest area of your plot.



Small town garden

The bold choice of dark pavers for the dining terrace, laid in a square and framed in a paler stone creates a chic look. By keeping the hard landscaping simple it opens up the small space and does not detract from the evergreen planting. Larger furniture makes a statement in a small area, so is both decorative and functional. Position the table and chairs off centre to make the space feel bigger and leave a clear passage down the garden.



Cosy cottage style

Give the cottage-garden look a modern twist by choosing a limited colour palette. This is important in a small space as too many colours can seem fussy. Repeat plants along the edge of a path to draw your eye through the garden. Use spires and globes to create accent points and plant topiary evergreens to provide structure all year round.



Shady solutions

Tricky areas such as shady passageways or courtyard gardens with little or no soil can be transformed with a variety of containers. Create height with pots that are large enough for a tree and limit the number of niches to avoid a cluttered look. Create unity by painting windows and conservatories in a pale colour to complement the pots and furniture.



Small gardens

Design solutions

It's easy to unlock the potential in your outdoor space and make it seem larger by using clever planting and design tricks. Whatever the size of your patch, it's tempting to think about what you could do if you had a larger plot. But lack of space needn't hold you back. Follow our top tips to fulfil your garden's potential, whether it's limiting the colour palette or making your borders bigger. By thinking creatively, it's possible to make the most of your space.

Divide up your space

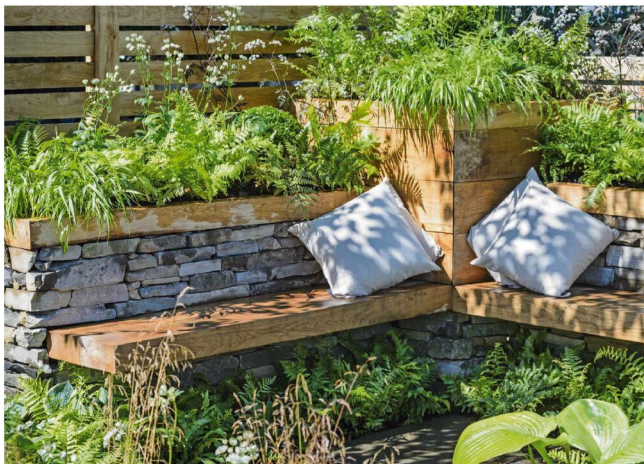
Even the smallest plot will seem bigger if you can't see everything immediately. Dividing the garden with flowerbeds, trees, hedges or screens covered in climbers feels like a strange thing to do when space is tight, but this approach creates a sense of intrigue. By introducing hidden corners and giving each area a distinct style, the garden will make an impact way beyond its size.





Choose light-coloured materials

In small gardens, especially if you're in a town, there is often a lot of shade cast from nearby buildings, boundaries or trees. Using light-toned materials can make a big difference. Bounce light around the garden by using light-coloured paving, a pale gravel mulch or by painting the boundaries a light shade. Not only will this make the space seem bigger, but it will also show your plants off to their best advantage.



Use space-saving seats

Furniture is often treated as an afterthought, but when space is limited it should be an integral part of your garden – practical as well as attractive. You can save space by building seating into your plot – capping a retaining wall with a nice piece of timber or making a bench double up as storage. In a small area, seating should be part of the overall design. Integrated benching against boundaries means no space is wasted behind and allows more people to sit. When making your own seating, aim for a height of around 45cm and choose materials that will complement the plants and landscaping around it.

Be generous with your borders

The tendency is to be mean in small spaces – tiny paths, tiny steps and miserable, thin borders, all squeezed in around the biggest lawn possible. But if you shrink the lawn and then max out on borders – allowing generous depths of planting – the space will expand visually. This gives you room to exploit several layers of planting in a single border, including eye level and above. Adding small trees increases the depth and variety and interrupts the eye line. Choose trees with more than one season of interest, such as a quince or medlar.



Limit your colour palette

Gardeners love colourful plants, and lots of them, but by showing a little restraint you can make your garden appear bigger and more cohesive. Simply use larger groups of plants of the same colour to create greater impact. Too many plants of too small a number with too much variation can lead to a dotty 'pizza' effect.

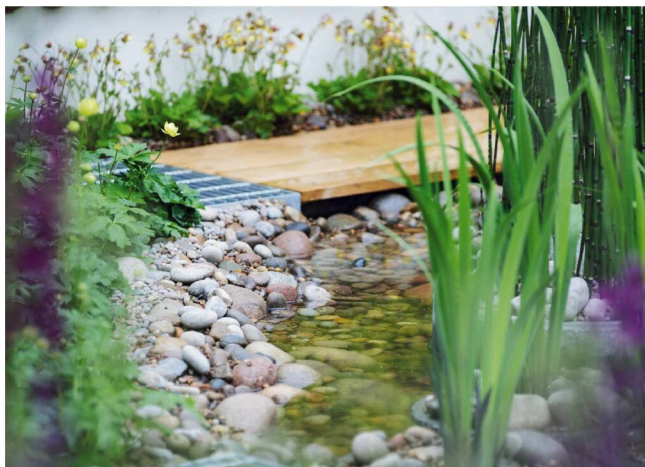
**Opt for practical seating**

Seating is essential in every garden, providing somewhere to relax and entertain. If you're tight on space but still want to sit outside, a folding bistro table and chairs take up little room and can be packed away when not in use. They come in many styles to complement your garden.

Use mirrors

Mirrors make a small space look bigger, fooling the eye into thinking there is something beyond and reflecting light and interest. Hiding the edges with plants perpetuates the illusion. Acrylic mirrors are cheaper than glass; or buy old mirrors from junk shops – their distressed look is very effective. To reduce the risk of birds being tricked by mirrors, use smaller ones and put airy plants or trellis in front.





Build a pond

Water in a small garden adds movement, light and reflections and can attract wildlife and birds into the space. You may not be able to put in a traditional pond, but water features come in all shapes and sizes, from trickle fountains to ponds created in pots and containers. Look out for wide, shallow pots and seal the drainage holes with silicone, or recycle an old tin bath or barrel lined with plastic and fill with rainwater. For a wildlife-friendly feature, always ensure there is a way for creatures to climb in and out.

Go for bold colours

Introduce year-round colour to small gardens with furniture and accessories. Colour can also be added to small features, such as the window and frame of a shed, a bench and even pots. Choose a shade that adds sparkle – perhaps pick up on a plant colour or borrow from the house or surrounding features. Accent shades on walls work just as well outside as inside your home. Blues help to make a space feel bigger, while brighter colours really jump out at you. Either way, bring some year-round energy to your garden.

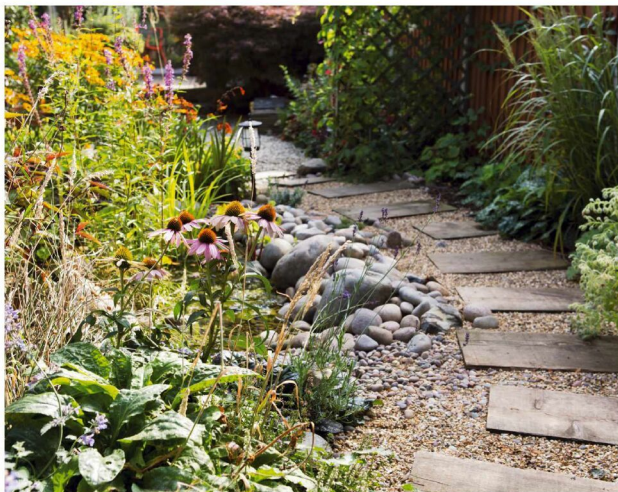


Ditch the lawn

A lawn can accentuate the small space of little gardens. Turning it into a gravel garden provides scope for imaginative planting that will tease and hold the eye, creating interest and a sense that the space is larger than it is. Gravel is a wonderful medium for plants. It allows you to walk among the plants in a more intimate way than just admiring your hard work from one side of a flowerbed.

Lead the way

Create a curved path to trick the eye into thinking that the garden is longer than it really is. When you're not able to see what is round the corner it gives the illusion that the space is bigger than it is, as the eye is taken one way and then the other, rather than straight to the back of the garden.





Welcome in wildlife

Wildlife needs food, shelter and breeding sites, and gardens are increasingly providing these – smaller spaces often more so, squeezed as they are into urban areas. Nurture your hedges for the dense cover they offer, rather than replace them with a fence. Grow a wide range of plants such as climbers, shrubs and trees, and leave seedheads and fading stems standing to provide winter shelter and food for wildlife. Set up homes such as insect hotels, nesting boxes and these woven roosting pockets hung in trees.

Add a focal point

Don't be afraid to be bold in a small garden – it is better to have one large feature than a group of small ones, which can make a limited space look cluttered. When it comes to pots, plant up a large container which can make a year-round feature or change it seasonally to give your garden a lift through the year.



Install a water feature

Bring the soothing effect of water into a garden. Water features don't need to take up an enormous amount of space and many of the simpler ones only require minimal wiring and a pump, while other models are solar-powered or decorated with LED lights. This wooden bowl is powered by nature – fill it up, sit back and relax!

Create a calm retreat

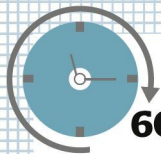
Turn the size of your garden into an advantage – a tiny space can be an oasis away from a busy schedule. Create a private, secluded area where you are able to relax and enjoy your surroundings. Make a feature of your hard landscaping and choose complementary colours and shapes for the seating and stonework.





Make a child-friendly space

A small garden can combine plants and be stylish while also catering for children. Soften features such as playhouses with plants and include a few ideas to entertain children. A small sandpit made from materials that complement the rest of the space will be less of an eyesore – this one has a lid so it can double as a table.



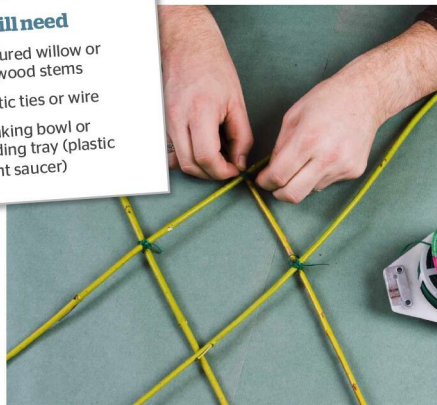
60-minute project

Make a hanging bird feeder

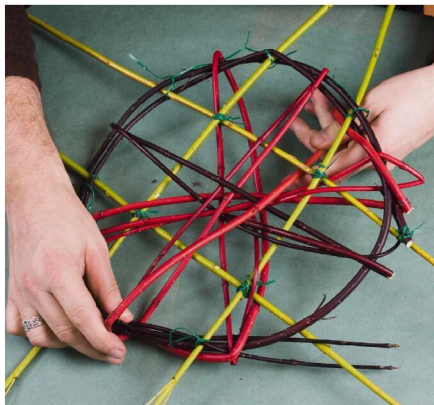
Even in a small garden, it's easy to attract wildlife. This colourful hanging basket won't take up ground space and can be used as a bird feeder or bird bath. It's simple

You will need

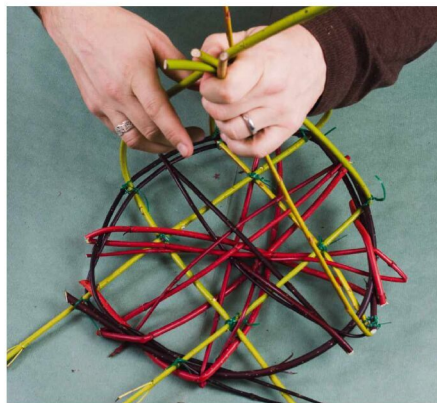
- ☐ Coloured willow or dogwood stems
- ☐ Plastic ties or wire
- ☐ Drinking bowl or feeding tray (plastic plant saucer)



1 Arrange four willow or dogwood stems on a flat surface to form a 'noughts-and-crosses' grid, leaving the long ends sticking out from the central square in each direction. Secure these in place with wire at each corner.



2 Weave two or three stems into the grid to form a round shape the same diameter as the dish that will sit in the centre. Add more stems to make a series of cross pieces that link the circle and the square formed by the main stems. Secure as needed.



3 Bend up the eight long ends of the main supports and carefully draw them all together centrally. Near the top, wrap a length of wire firmly around these stems to hold them all in place.



4 Place the saucer inside your basket. Then weave several more stems into the structure to create sides that will hold the dish securely. Hang the basket out of reach of cats. Fill with seeds or suitable food scraps or keep topped up with fresh water.





do it in a day

Make a climbing frame

Want to grow a climber but not sure how to support it? Make a simple structure, using silver garden wire and metal rods, and create an interesting shape by

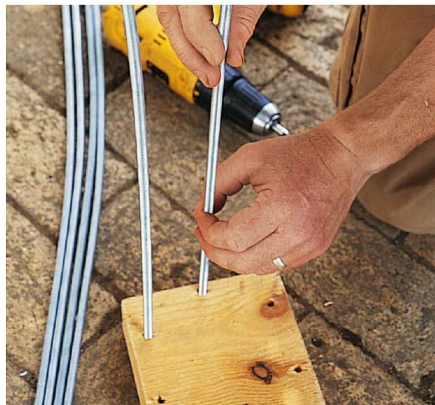
bending the rods and tying them in place. It can be as big as you like, although a minimum of 1m high is best for lightweight climbers such as nasturtiums.

You will need

- ☐ Six 1m-long, 8mm zinc thread rods
- ☐ One 15cm sq piece of 50mm timber
- ☐ Drill and 8mm drill bit
- ☐ 30m of 1.5mm galvanised garden wire
- ☐ 35m of 1mm galvanised garden wire
- ☐ Pliers



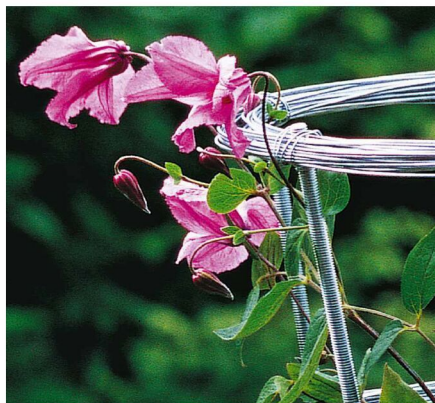
1 Gently bend the zinc rods near their centre to create a curve, then tweak them until they're all the same – try bending them over the edge of an old table as this will give you more control.



2 Mark a circle 14cm in diameter on the timber square. Drill six 8mm holes at equal distances around the circle. Push the six metal rods into their holes in the timber and position them so that they all curve outwards.



3 To secure the rods at the top, make a ring of garden wire 2cm thick and the same diameter as the top of the structure. Push this over the ends of the rods to make a rim. Bind with the 1mm wire.



4 Add rings at regular intervals down the structure and attach with wire. Place in your border to add height and interest. Use to support climbers such as clematis, which will clamber up the metal supports.





weekend project

Make a mini pond

Our pond-in-a-pot is the ideal place to grow some of the miniature varieties of water lily and other small aquatic plants. Large ponds take up lots of space in the

garden and a good deal of time. A container water feature, on the other hand, can be created easily, fits into the tiniest area and requires minimal care.

You will need

- ☐ Two 20cm diameter round aquatic planting baskets
- ☐ Aquatic compost
- ☐ One water lily, *Nymphaea* 'Pygmaea Helvola'
- ☐ Washed pea gravel
- ☐ One *Acorus gramineus* 'Variegatus'
- ☐ Two bricks
- ☐ One container with no holes (or drainage holes plugged) at least 45cm wide and 35cm deep



1 To plant the pond, half-fill a mesh planting basket with aquatic compost, firming it in place thoroughly with your fingers. Spread out the roots of the water lily on top, taking care not to break them.



2 Fill in around the water lily's roots with more aquatic compost, firming it in layers, then weight with washed pea gravel. In another planting basket, plant the acorus in the same way.



3 Place the two bricks in the base of the container. Make sure you're happy with the container's position, then fill it with rainwater (it will be too heavy to move once full). Lower the baskets into the water, standing them on the bricks.



4 Surround the pond with pots for an eye-catching display. Keep it clean by adding an oxygenating plant such as hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), which is dainty and often used in cold-water aquariums.



Space-savvy garden plans

City front garden

Front gardens in towns are rarely larger than a few square metres, but with good planning even the smallest patch can be transformed into a glorious plant-led entrance. Adorning these spaces with plants might be our first instinct as gardeners, but there are a few city-living practicalities to consider - bikes and bins need storage, while privacy and street litter also require thought.

It's also important to settle on a style. Some properties suit formal or contemporary looks with straight lines and topiary, while others are scattered with softer shapes and cottage-style planting. Another consideration is microclimate. City plots are often warmer than country gardens, which can open up a palette of species that rarely thrive elsewhere.

Whatever your style, practicalities or microclimate, a few key groups of plants will guarantee that year-round welcome. Hardworking evergreen shrubs and perennials with diverse textures and tones are essential, forming the backbone of the planting, while multi-season show-stoppers deliver months of flower, fruit and autumn colour. These, combined with seasonal pop-ups such as tulips and alliums, along with scented species and self-seeders, will provide a 'welcome home' every day of the year.

Material assets

Choose a durable material for the path, such as brick, stone or riven tiles. Avoid porous materials, as they can encourage slippery algae and moss growth.

Safe storage

Incorporate a secure bike store to save you wheeling cycles through the house. It should match your bin store.

Clever camouflage

Create a bin enclosure from brick, timber, fencing panels or trellis, which can be smothered in ivy or other evergreen climbers. Position it so that access to the bins is easy.

Up front fragrance

Use scented plants to welcome visitors - you can't beat roses and lavender in summer, while *sarcococca* releases winter scent.



Ideal climbers

Evergreen climbers provide year-round foliage and rarely have a 'down season' – perfect, as a front garden is always on show. Star jasmine works well.

Perfect path

Gravel makes a smart, rain-permeable surface. Choose a larger grade (ideally 20mm) to prevent cats using it as a litter tray.

All-year interest

Light-leaved evergreens provide a fresh, permanent backbone to the garden. Try *Euphorbia mellifera* or *Nandina domestica*.

Blooming marvellous

Small spaces need plants with long blooming seasons. *Rosa* 'Flower Carpet Amber' flowers for up to eight months.

Great gap fillers

Self-seeders work well as gap fillers. They're easy to remove, so they can be edited at will – *Alchemilla mollis* is a classic choice.

Buffer zone

A low brick wall topped with wrought-iron railings lends a timeless feel. It also stops litter blowing into your space and allows light and air to penetrate.

Focal flowers

A feature pot is a useful focal point. Fill it with hardy, long-flowering, drought-tolerant plants to reduce the need for watering. *Delosperma* 'Fire Spinner' makes a good choice.

Shady character

A small, open, canopied tree can make a home feel less exposed, while providing flowers, fruit and dappled shade. *Malus* 'Royal Beauty' is perfect.

Space-savvy garden plans

Shady courtyard

There is a certain romance to courtyards, but those in the shade can be gloomy, dank and claustrophobic when left to their own devices. These walled environments receive scant light, can often be marred by a 'rain shadow' causing dryness, yet also retain humidity and potentially become frost pockets, too. However, the many challenges of growing successfully in these spaces are not insurmountable. By employing a set of design tricks and a particular palette of plants, shady courtyards can burgeon with a verdant array of lush foliage and flowers.

As these 'outdoor rooms' will often lack views or openings onto a larger landscape, design techniques and tricks in compact courtyards need to focus on creating a sense of space. This can be achieved with colour, water, mirrors, lighting and perspective illusions. Planting is more of a challenge as only a small range of garden-worthy species will grow in the odd mix of dry soil, high humidity and low light presented by shady courtyards. Small ferns are an easy win, along with other woodlanders such as hellebores and pulmonaria, but there are a few really choice plants such as the voluptuous *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' or hardy tree ferns that will thrive, too.

Steal some space

Add false depth with striped paving such as rows of brick laid closer the further they are from the main view.

Winter winners

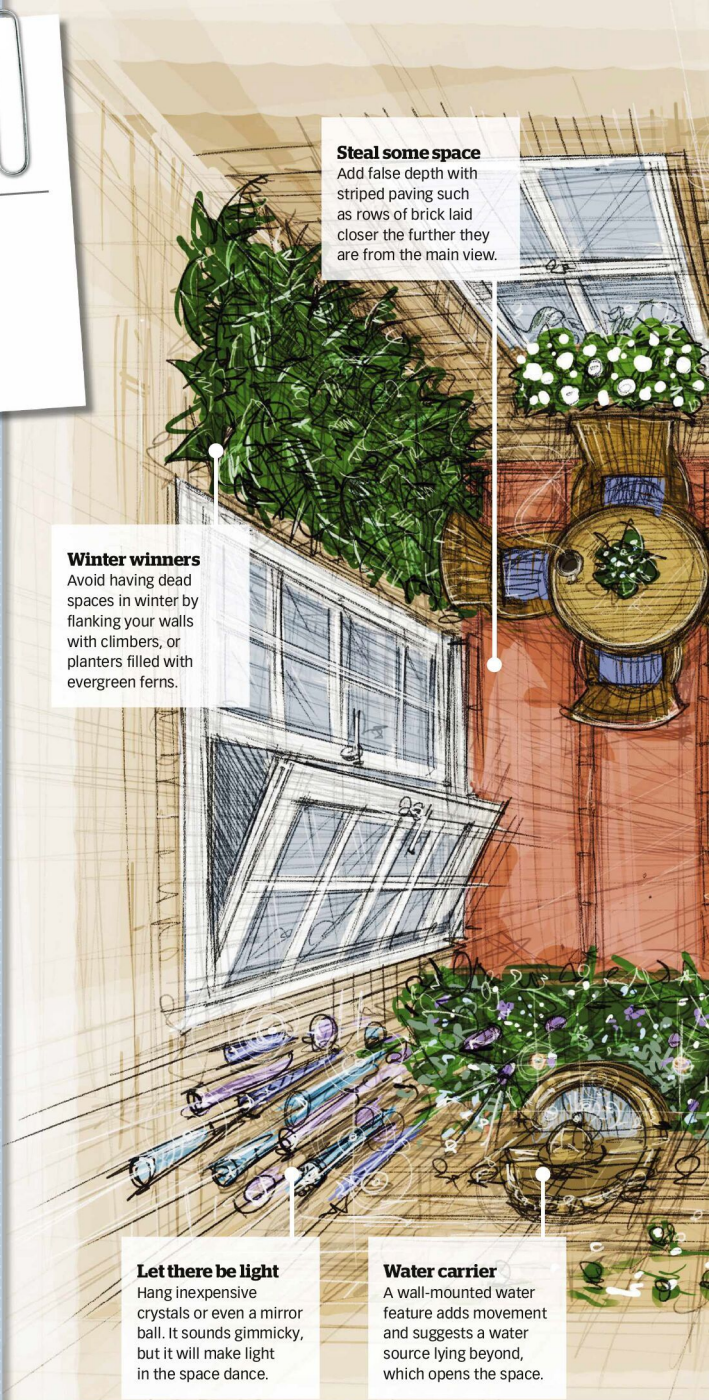
Avoid having dead spaces in winter by flanking your walls with climbers, or planters filled with evergreen ferns.

Let there be light

Hang inexpensive crystals or even a mirror ball. It sounds gimmicky, but it will make light in the space dance.

Water carrier

A wall-mounted water feature adds movement and suggests a water source lying beyond, which opens the space.



Box clever

Create a false sense of space with perspective tricks such as rows of ever decreasing box balls, which will make the area seem longer.

Warm welcome

Choose pale but warming shades for rendered walls. A pale primrose-yellow tone works very well.

Shade lovers

Hostas, tree ferns, foxgloves and tiarella will thrive in the shady, damp conditions of a courtyard garden.

In perspective

Include a trompe l'oeil or a 'perspective trellis' with a mirror behind to avoid shade becoming oppressive.

Colour scheme

Cool blue, white and other pale shades in the planting provide an artificial sense of depth, as these colours recess.

Brilliant white

Silver foliage plants like *Brunnera macrophylla* 'Jack Frost' can lead the eye to ground level, expanding the space.

Light conductor

Add water in the form of a low pond. It will reflect the sky and help bounce light into the gloomiest corners.





Plants for small spaces

Choosing the right plants for the right place is vital in a small space. Each has to earn its place in your garden, whether on your patio or in a border or pot. One season of interest isn't enough - look for plants that flower for weeks, provide structure or other highlights such as autumn colour, berries, striking bark or attractive foliage. The most valuable trees and shrubs for small spaces are the real all-year-rounders that provide a sequence of changing highlights through the seasons, offering structure, colour and scent.



50 small space plants

Spring

1

Magnolia x loebneri
'Leonard Messel'

M. loebneri varieties make superb small trees, and 'Leonard Messel' is one of the prettiest, producing abundant pale-pink flowers in mid-spring that appear on bare branches.

Flowers April
H x S 8m x 6m



2

Rosemary

Whether it's grown in a border or a pot, rosemary is not only useful in cooking, it also has a lovely scent and attractive flowers. Try fairly compact 'Severn Sea' with dark flowers and an arching habit.

Flowers March to May

H x S 100cm x 80cm



3

Crab apple

The 'Red Sentinel' variety can fit into even the smallest garden and has terrific wildlife value. It is laden with pink or white blossom in spring, while in summer it produces tasty crab apples.

Flowers March to April

H x S 8m x 8m



4

Weigela

Spring-flowering shrubs add structure and a boost of colour to the border. Compact, low-growing varieties are available at around 50cm high in a range of colours both in flower and foliage.

Flowers May to June

H x S 1.5m x 1.5m



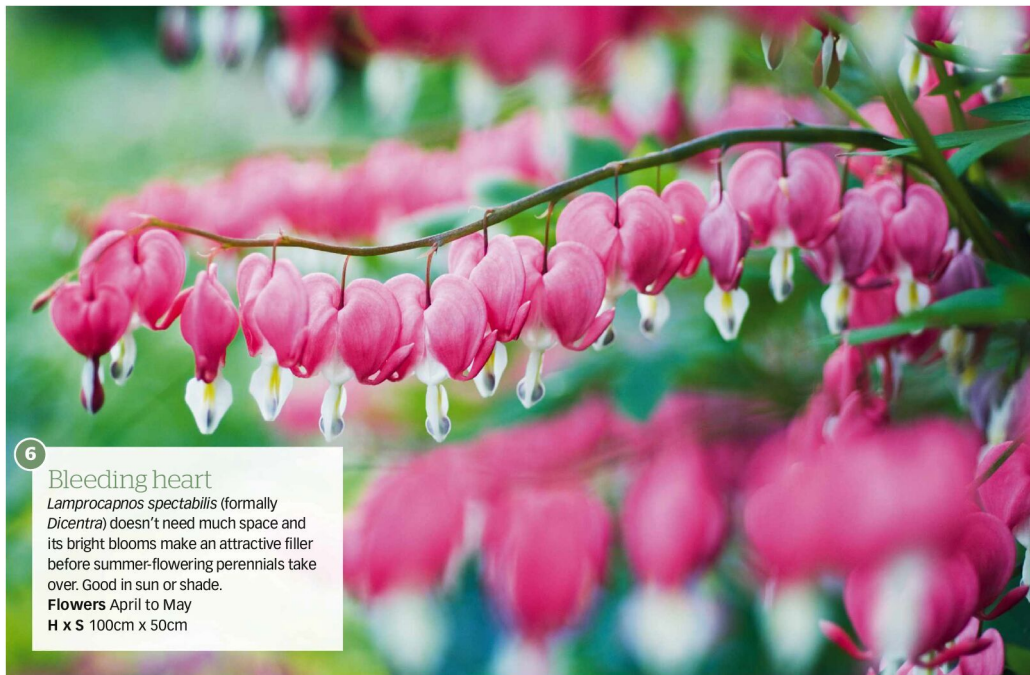
5

Amelanchier lamarkii

A fantastic tree for a small garden, this variety produces small, star-shaped white flowers in spring, followed by black berries in summer and beautiful foliage colour in autumn.

Flowers March to April

H x S 10m x 6m



6

Bleeding heart

Lamprocapnos spectabilis (formally *Dicentra*) doesn't need much space and its bright blooms make an attractive filler before summer-flowering perennials take over. Good in sun or shade.

Flowers April to May

H x S 100cm x 50cm



7

Brunnera macrophylla 'Jack Frost'

With its pretty bright blue flowers complemented by silver-grey foliage, this is an ideal choice if you want something a little more unusual for a spring garden.

Flowers April to May

H x S 40cm x 60cm



8

Vinca minor

A popular ground-cover plant in borders and containers, its creeping, arching stems make an eye-catching carpet of bright green foliage. Cultivars such as 'Bowles's Variety' go on through summer.

Flowers April to September

H x S 20cm x 50cm



9

Hart's tongue fern

Glossy new fronds unfurl in spring, providing foliage for year-round interest among shrubs and other shade-loving perennials. It grows slowly and needs little attention apart from annual mulching and tidying in spring.

H x S 60cm x 60cm



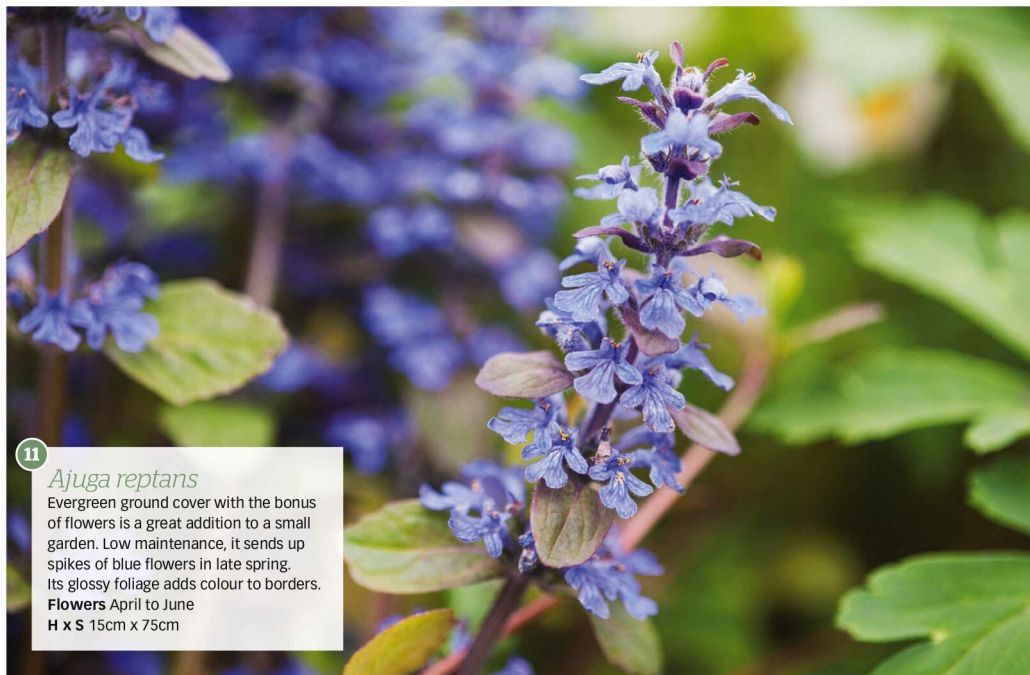
10

Akebia quinata

Make the most of your boundaries with this climber that produces chocolate to maroon flowers in early spring. It keeps its leaves well into winter, when they take on a purple tint.

Flowers March to May

H x S 10m x 2m, if left unpruned



11

Ajuga reptans

Evergreen ground cover with the bonus of flowers is a great addition to a small garden. Low maintenance, it sends up spikes of blue flowers in late spring. Its glossy foliage adds colour to borders.

Flowers April to June

H x S 15cm x 75cm



12

Pulmonaria

Excellent in shady borders, the flowers come in blue, violet, pink, purple, red or white. *P. 'Lewis Palmer'* bears clusters of blooms that open pink before turning blue, in contrast with spotted leaves.

Flowers March to May

H x S 35cm x 45cm



13

Euphorbia characias subsp. *wulfenii*

This euphorbia is architectural and evergreen, so provides structure all year round. It also bears acid-yellow flowers in spring, which go well with tulips.

Flowers March to May

H x S 1.5m x 1.2m



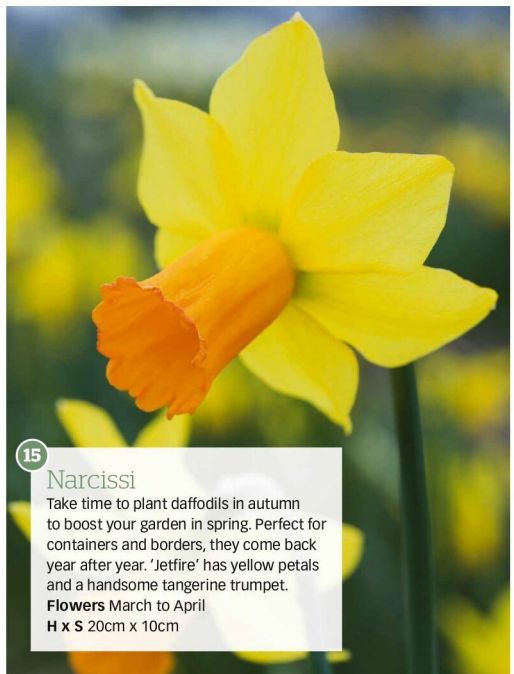
14

Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy'

A slow-growing tree, this cercis bears pinky violet blossom on bare stems in spring, followed by dark-purple leaves in summer that turn yellow in autumn.

Flowers March to April

H x S 10m x 10m



15

Narcissi

Take time to plant daffodils in autumn to boost your garden in spring. Perfect for containers and borders, they come back year after year. 'Jetfire' has yellow petals and a handsome tangerine trumpet.

Flowers March to April

H x S 20cm x 10cm



16

Tulips

Tulips in pots or borders take up little space and offer an easy way to add a burst of seasonal colour. 'Ballerina' is a striking choice with its vibrant tangerine-orange colour. It also has a heady scent when warmed by the sun.

Flowers April to May

H x S 55cm x 10cm



50 small space plants

Summer

Every garden should have one or two of these plants - many flower for months, while others are reliable stalwarts - but all make a striking addition to any display.

17

Roses

Look for repeat-flowering, compact bush or shrub roses that won't take up much room and will give the longest season of interest. Avoid vigorous ramblers. Choose scented varieties such as 'Harlow Carr' and 'Desdemona'.

Flowers June to November

Height x Spread 100cm x 100cm



18

Blue fescue

Plant several of these evergreen grasses in a group in a sunny spot for a strong architectural effect. They also make interesting fountain shapes in containers and go well with spring or summer bulbs.

Flowers June to July

H x S 30cm x 25cm



19

Alchemilla mollis

Lady's mantle is an attractive edging plant with wavy-edged leaves and bright lime-green flowers. It tolerates a range of conditions, including heavy clay and drought, and is fully hardy.

Flowers June to September

H x S 60cm x 75cm



20

Hydrangea quercifolia

A good shrub for a partially shady spot, the oak-leaved hydrangea has long-lasting, cone-shaped flowers; in autumn, the leaves turn bronze, orange and reddish-purple before falling.

Flowers July to September

H x S 2m x 2m



21

Erigeron karvinskianus

This pretty daisy is low-growing, low maintenance and will flourish in a variety of spots, whether you want flowers spilling over the edge of a border or a filler for cracks in a path.

Flowers June to October

H x S 30cm x 100cm



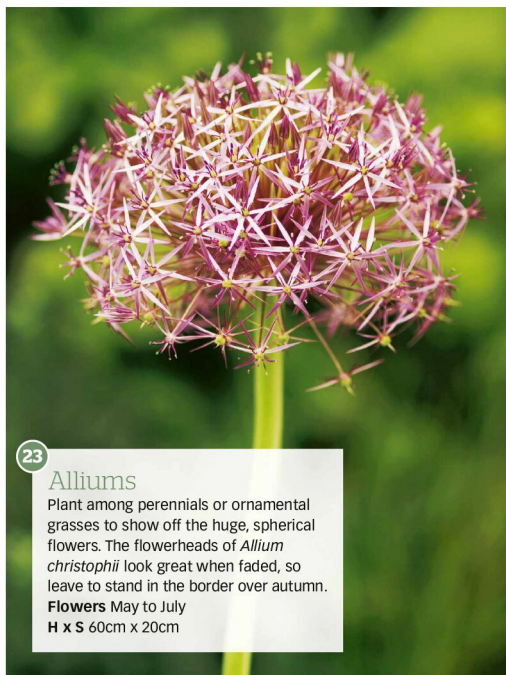
22

Hardy cranesbill

Ground-cover geraniums are ideal for softening path edges and filling gaps in borders. 'Rozanne' is a popular choice with its rounded deep-blue flowers. Keep deadheading and it'll carry on flowering.

Flowers June to September

H x S 60cm x 50cm



23

Alliums

Plant among perennials or ornamental grasses to show off the huge, spherical flowers. The flowerheads of *Allium christophii* look great when faded, so leave to stand in the border over autumn.

Flowers May to July

H x S 60cm x 20cm



24

Trachelospermum jasminoides

This evergreen climber produces scented flowers in summer and, as it's slightly tender, is well suited to the warmer microclimates of urban gardens.

Flowers June to August

H x S 9m x 3m

25

Erysimum 'Bowles's Mauve'

This perennial wallflower is perfect for a border, often flowering well into autumn. It forms an evergreen clump and its purple flowers attract butterflies.

Flowers February to July

H x S 75cm x 60cm

26

Lavender

'Little Lottie' is a compact dwarf lavender that bears fragrant pink-purple flowers. It works well in full sun at the front of a border, in containers or as an informal hedge.

Flowers July to September

H x S 30cm x 30cm

27

Salvias

The tall, colourful flowers of hardy salvias are hard to beat in a small space – and 'Mainacht' is a good pick as it's compact. Cut back the flower spikes after flowering to encourage a second flush.

Flowers July to September

H x S 75cm x 45cm



28

Dahlias

Long-flowering and available in an array of colours, shapes and heights, dahlias are excellent for providing drama in the border. Try 'Bishop of Llandaff' or 'Bishop of Canterbury' for striking colour.

Flowers July to November

H x S 100cm x 45cm



29

Hakonechloa macrochaeta *'Aureola'*

Slow-growing with wide, arching leaves that lend a gentle architectural note, this goes well with hostas, acers, ferns and other plants that enjoy part shade.

Flowers August to September

H x S 35cm x 40cm



30

Briza media

This short-lived perennial is popular for its delicate flowerheads that shimmer in low sunlight. It tolerates light shade, so acts as a useful filler among taller shrubs and perennials.

Flowers May to June

H x S 90cm x 30cm



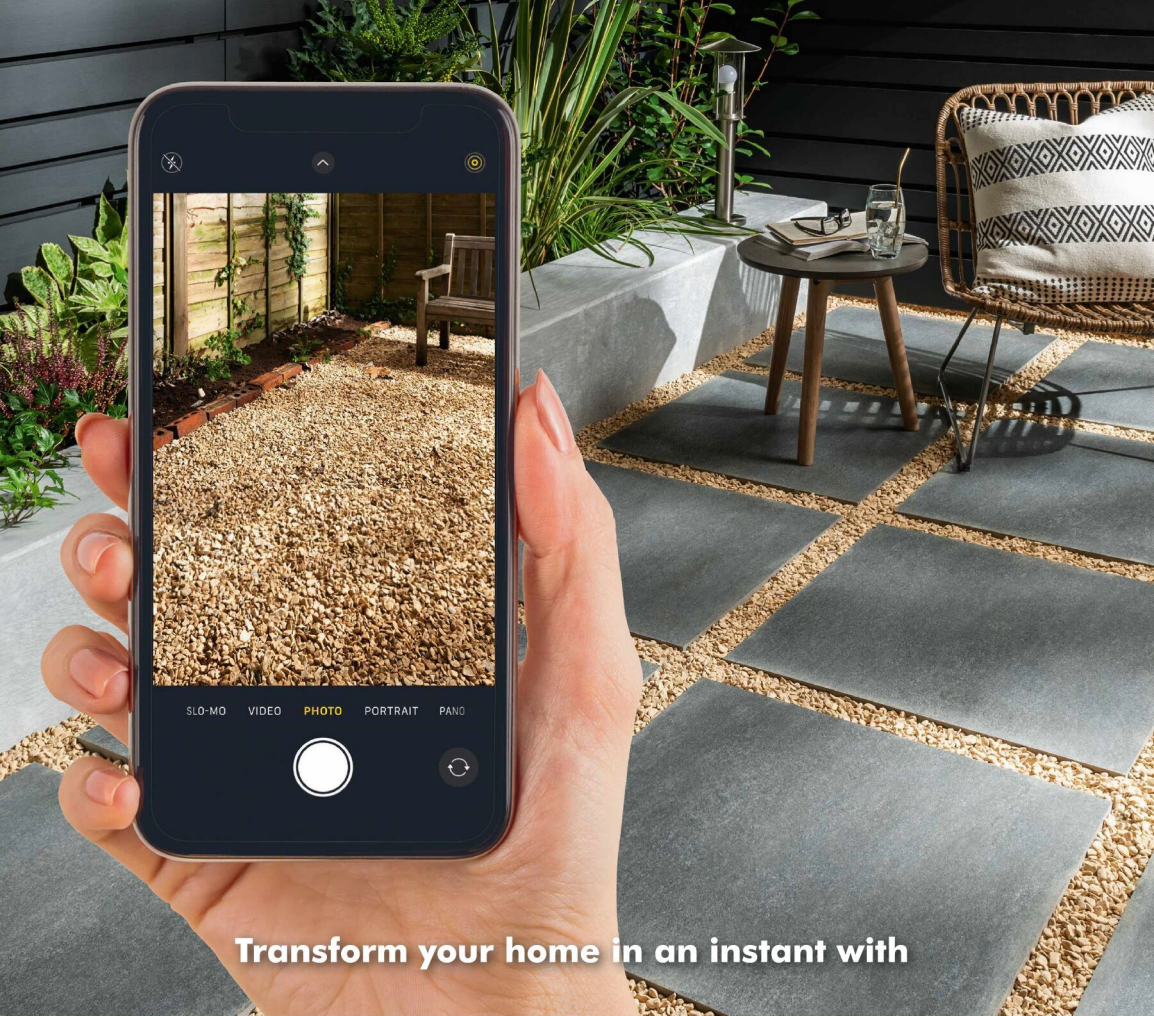
31

Late-flowering clematis

Climbers are perfect in small spaces, cladding boundaries in colour or adding height up wigwams. Cut back late flowerers such as *Clematis* 'Odoriba' in late winter, to buds 20cm above the soil.

Flowers June to October

H x S 3m x 2m



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50 small space plants

Autumn

32

Pyracantha

Train this valuable shrub up a wall and you'll have year-round interest – it has evergreen leaves, small white flowers in summer and vibrant red, orange or yellow berries in autumn that attract birds.

Flowers June

H x S 3m x 3m



33

Imperata cylindrica
'Rubra'

Compact Japanese blood grass fires up borders with its flame-coloured blades. Combine with other grasses or vibrant flowers, or plant in a patio container.

Flowers June to August

H x S 40cm x 30cm



34

Gaultheria procumbens

This dwarf evergreen shrub has white or pink flowers in late summer, red-tinted leaves in autumn, followed by scarlet berries that will cheer up borders right through winter into spring.

Flowers July to August

H x S 50cm x 100cm



35

*Heuchera*s

These useful foliage plants provide year-round interest and are ideal ground cover at the front of borders or planted in containers. There is a huge range of colours and leaf patterns to choose from.

Flowers June to August

H x S 45cm x 45cm



36

Acer palmatum
'Dissectum'

This Japanese maple is great for small gardens, due to its attractive shape and slow-growing nature. Try 'Baldsmith', which has rich orange leaves in autumn.

Flowers April to May

H x S 2m x 3m



37

Japanese anemones

These flowers have lovely slender stems and appear in autumn when many perennials have died down. Dwarf varieties are available, such as 'Pretty Lady Julia'.

Flowers August to October

H x S 90cm x 45cm



38

Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster'

Ornamental grasses give a contemporary architectural look to a border. This variety, which is tall but doesn't take up much room, turns a straw colour in autumn.

Flowers July to September

H x S 1.8m x 60cm



39

Pittosporum 'Tom Thumb'

This compact evergreen shrub with a rounded shape and small dark purple leaves is ideal for growing against a south-facing wall, or pair with ornamental grasses. Protect from frost and wind.

H x S 100cm x 60cm



40

Autumn crocuses

Pretty autumn crocuses (*Crocus speciosus*) have lilac-blue flowers with dark veins and white throats. Plant in pots or in borders, where they make a glorious display under deciduous shrubs. They prefer a sunny spot.

Flowers September to November

H x S 15cm x 5cm



50 small space plants

Winter

41

Hellebores

An invaluable plant for bringing colour to the garden in late winter – you'll find varieties in many shades from white through to plum and near-black. Hellebores are low maintenance and will thrive in sun or shade.

Flowers December to April

H x S 30-60cm x 30-60cm



42

Witch hazel

Scent has a powerful impact in a small space. Varieties such as *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Aphrodite' have scented flowers in winter when little else is in bloom and intense red leaves in autumn.

Flowers December to February

H x S 3m x 3m



43

Box

Provides form and structure all year round, whether it's shaped into balls or cones, or used as a low hedge. Box makes a good backdrop for herbaceous plants in summer and looks attractive covered in frost and snow in winter.

H x S 5m x 5m, if left unpruned



44

Sweet box

Sarcococca confusa has delicate flowers that waft a heady scent in winter. This shrub is slow-growing and perfect for a shady border. As it's evergreen, it also adds interest all year round.

Flowers December to March

H x S 2m x 1m



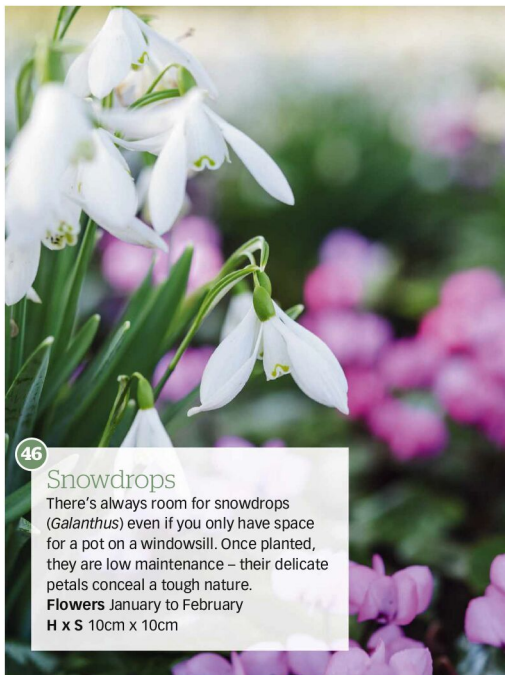
45

Iris reticulata

Tiny sky-blue or deep-blue trumpets, licked here and there with gold, are joyous heralds of winter's end. This is an easy plant pick providing colour in the smallest of spaces.

Flowers January to February

H x S 15cm x 8cm



46

Snowdrops

There's always room for snowdrops (*Galanthus*) even if you only have space for a pot on a windowsill. Once planted, they are low maintenance – their delicate petals conceal a tough nature.

Flowers January to February

H x S 10cm x 10cm



47

Winter-flowering pansies

With their yellow, maroon, white or purple 'faces', winter-flowering pansies will keep blooming, except in the very worst weather, providing excellent easy colour for containers and flowerbeds.

Flowers October to May

H x S 25cm x 25cm



48

Skimmia japonica reevesiana

This compact evergreen shrub doesn't mind a bit of shade and its bright berries remain over winter, perking up a gloomy corner. Has small white flowers in spring.

Flowers April to May

H x S 100cm x 90cm



49

Ivy

This versatile evergreen climber can be used to cover boundaries, or planted in containers. There are also variegated types to lighten north-facing fences. Its flowers and berries attract wildlife.

Flowers October to November

H x S 10m x 10m if left



50

Clematis cirrhosa

If you've run out of room in the ground, there's always room to squeeze in another clematis. The winter-flowering *C. cirrhosa* 'Freckles' has creamy bells dappled with red, or try 'Wisley Cream' which has nodding cream bells.

Flowers December to February

H x S 4m x 1.5m



Small space plants

Design solutions

Plants in a small garden can produce big impact as long as you use them wisely. Choose the right varieties and look at the planting potential of every part of your garden – from the dank, shady corners to the north-facing walls and sunny locations. There is a plant for every situation and we have plenty of design tricks for planting that can help to make your space look bigger than it really is.

Make more of shade

Small gardens are frequently overshadowed by houses, walls or trees. Although plants need sunlight to survive, many have adapted to cope with lower light levels and will grow in shade – they just produce fewer flowers or fruit. The key is to know the extent of your shade and then choose plants accordingly. Ferns, foxgloves, hostas, heucheras, epimediums – these are just a few picks for a shady spot.





Go tropical

Small gardens often have a microclimate, very different to the environment around them. Gardens surrounded by buildings or walls are protected from the wind and this makes them warmer. Choose a sunny corner and grow more tender, tropical-style plants. Use tall, airy ones such as palms to enhance the sheltered feeling.

Use fragrance

Scented plants turn a garden into a fragrant oasis, with the effect intensified in a smaller space. Look for plants with different seasons of fragrance to provide scent all year round and grow scented shrubs near the door or along a path so their perfume greets you as you brush against them. Place pots of herbs next to a bench or around the patio where you sit, and squeeze plants that release their scent when crushed, such as thyme, into gaps in paths.



Make a feature of foliage

Foliage combinations can create a certain mood, whether exotic, eye-catching or calming. Palms, Japanese maples, fatsias or bamboos all have interesting foliage. Mix various colours and textures for impact – it can look just as striking as a bed of flowers.

Choose a colour scheme

Choosing the right colours can affect the perception of space. Cool shades such as blue and purple are not only calm colours, they can also make a space seem bigger. Colours from the cool side of the colour wheel seem further away, while hot ones like red and orange appear nearer.



Use every space

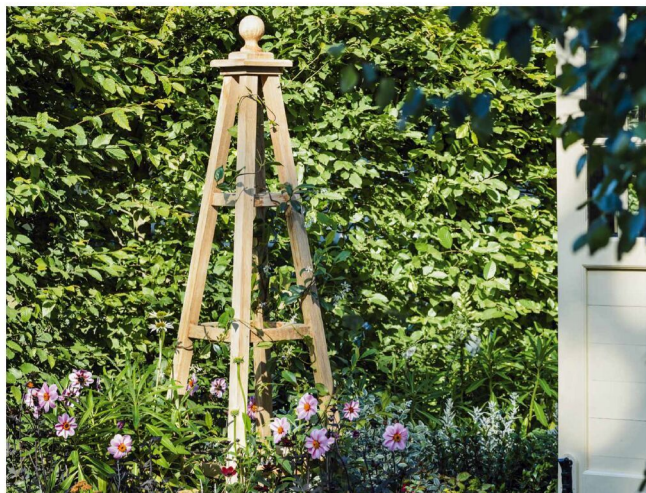
When space is limited, every planting opportunity is valuable. Add extra foliage and flowers to your garden by planting a 'green' roof on top of your shed or outdoor storage unit. The plants will knit together and create a year-round display.

Plant up your boundaries

You've filled the borders and crammed every container, but don't forget the boundaries in your garden. Fences, walls and hedges can be covered in climbers such as roses and clematis; *Tropaeolum speciosum* can scramble through hedges; and espaliered peaches can be grown against a wall.

Create height and structure

Using height in a small garden will draw the eye upwards and make the space feel bigger. Structural features such as obelisks (bare or clothed in climbers), arches, pergolas and tall sculptures will all lead the eye skyward, as will trees or tall shrubs. They help to broaden the view of the garden and, carefully dotted around, can also help to break it up into smaller areas, giving the impression that the space is bigger than it really is.



Add a small tree

There are plenty of beautiful trees that are ideal for small gardens and many grow happily in pots or raised beds. If you have room for only one, choose trees with interest such as Japanese maple with its fiery shades of foliage in autumn, or *Prunus autumnalis*, an attractive small tree with blossom that appears throughout winter.



Plant a green wall

Green walls (or living walls) used to be the preserve of the very few who could afford them. Now there are plenty of easy-to-install DIY systems available that offer great value for money. Fixed to a garden wall or fence, a green wall will transform a space.

Look for planting opportunities

With limited space, even nooks and crannies offer potential planting opportunities. Gaps in paving or setts can accommodate compact and low-growing plants such as thyme or creeping jenny. Or you may have bare spots in shady walls where ferns or toadflax can colonise. Even the poor soil at the base of a wall can become a space for growing hardy succulents such as sempervivums.



Use fewer and larger plants

Remember you're making a small garden, not a garden for small people. Too many little plants will make a space look fussy. A large plant in a small space can add real impact. Choose some big architectural species such as *Rhamnus alaternus*, *ceanothus*, *eribotrya* or *pittosporum*, which all provide height and impact. Train them up a wall or shape into trees – they will obscure boundaries and make the space feel much bigger.

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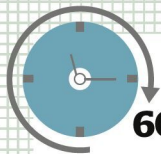
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60-minute project

Extend your flower displays

Cutting back plants in late May/June to extend their flowering time is known as the 'Chelsea chop'. The theory is simple – chopping down flowering perennial

stems by up to half delays flowering on those stems until later in the season, therefore extending the overall flowering time of the plant. It also keeps the garden tidy.

Try this on

- ☐ Achilleas
- ☐ Various asters, including *Aster novae-angliae*
- ☐ Border phlox, such as *Phlox paniculata* and *P. maculata*
- ☐ Milky bellflower (*Campanula lactiflora*)
- ☐ Shasta daisies (*Leucanthemum x superbum*)
- ☐ Valerian (*Centranthus*)



1 Cut stems above a leaf joint, reducing their height by around two-thirds. Snips or scissors are best for cutting the young, fleshy stems of most herbaceous perennials.



2 The dotted line shows the division between the cut stems and the uncut ones. Pruning half the plant means it'll produce two flushes of flowers, extending the overall display.

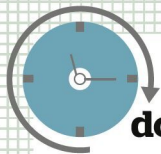


3 For a continuous display, randomly remove stems of perennial plants like this catmint – snip directly above a bud or leaf joint (top circle) to leave the stem about 10cm high (bottom circle).



4 This photo was taken in September. The circle shows where one of the stems was cut in May. All of the stems and flowers above this are a result of the cut.





do it in a day

How to plant a bare-root tree

A tree will add height and interest in a small garden. If you buy one by mail order, it'll often be delivered with bare roots. As there's no pot full of soil it's lightweight,

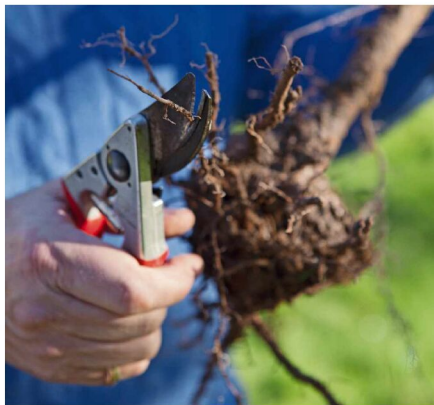
which saves delivery charges, so plants bought this way are cheaper. Bare-root trees can grow quickly because there's no chance of them being pot-bound.

You will need

- ☐ Spade, secateurs
- ☐ Mycorrhizal fungi
- ☐ Bamboo cane
- ☐ Compost
- ☐ Tree stake and tie
- ☐ Mallet



1 Bare-root trees must be planted while dormant in winter, or before bud-burst in early spring. If planting in grass, remove the turf and dig a hole twice the size of the rootball. Heap the excavated soil to one side.



2 Trimming the roots stimulates growth hormones. Shorten the thickest ones and snip back new roots to leave a tidy shape. Sprinkle mycorrhizal fungi into the hole but don't mix it into the soil – it must make good contact with the roots.

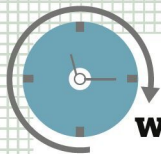


3 Stand the tree in place to ensure it's planted at the same level as previously, using the cane. Replace the soil in the hole around the roots, incorporating organic matter. Knock a short stake into the ground, at 45 degrees, about 30cm from the base of the trunk. Fasten the stake and tree with a tree tie.



4 Add a 5cm-deep mulch of organic matter or bark chips to the soil surface to retain moisture and keep down weeds. Shorten all the branches by half, cutting to buds to encourage the young tree to develop into a good 'goblet' shape. Water in well and continue to water well every few days in dry weather.





weekend project

Get more plants for free

It's important not to let plants get too big. Dividing perennials every few years makes them a manageable size and will give you more plants for free. Many

perennials die out in the centre after a few years, with the younger growth found on the outer edges. Divide your plants into fist-sized chunks before replanting.

Perennials to divide

- ☐ Hemerocallis
- ☐ Asters
- ☐ Hardy geraniums
- ☐ Euphorbia
- ☐ Ornamental grasses
- ☐ Delphiniums



1 Dig out the whole clump, making sure you include the roots. Some plants, like this hemerocallis, or day lily, will come out in one large clump, while others will come up in smaller sections. Don't worry if any bits fall off.



2 Split a large clump of tightly bound roots by using two forks of the same size, back to back, then drive them through the middle of the clump, levering them against each other to prise the clump apart.



3 Use a saw if the mass of roots has become tough and solid – which is often the case with fleshy-rooted plants – don't be afraid to slice through the clump's roots to make them a more manageable size.



4 Prepare the bed by improving the soil before replanting some of your smaller clumps in the same space. Dig the bed over thoroughly, breaking up the compacted soil and incorporating plenty of organic matter.



Space-savvy garden plans

Narrow borders

Many of us have narrow borders in our gardens – tiny strips of earth that offer challenges and opportunities. They are usually no wider than 30cm and the soil is often shallow and dry. This makes growing conditions difficult and restricts the palette of available plants. And if your border runs alongside a path, you'll need to think about access, too – there's little point cramming the soil with plants if they just flop over and make the path impassable.

It's not all bad news, though. Even a narrow strip of earth offers great possibilities, especially if it is at the base of a wall or fence, where climbers can transform the vertical space. As a bonus, walls tend to retain heat, helping tender plants, which would struggle elsewhere, to thrive. It may call for a change of approach, but plants with a small footprint and lots going on 'up top' can be used to great effect in a narrow space. Tall, compact and climbing plants are essential, as are bulbs and annuals, but with a bit of planning, it's easy to make a narrow border work for you.

Classy and compact

It can be difficult to include storage in narrow spaces. Seek out compact versions of garden essentials such as tool sheds and water butts.

Upwardly mobile

Choose shrubs and trees with a columnar habit. Corokia or cordon fruit work well in narrow spaces.

Have the edge

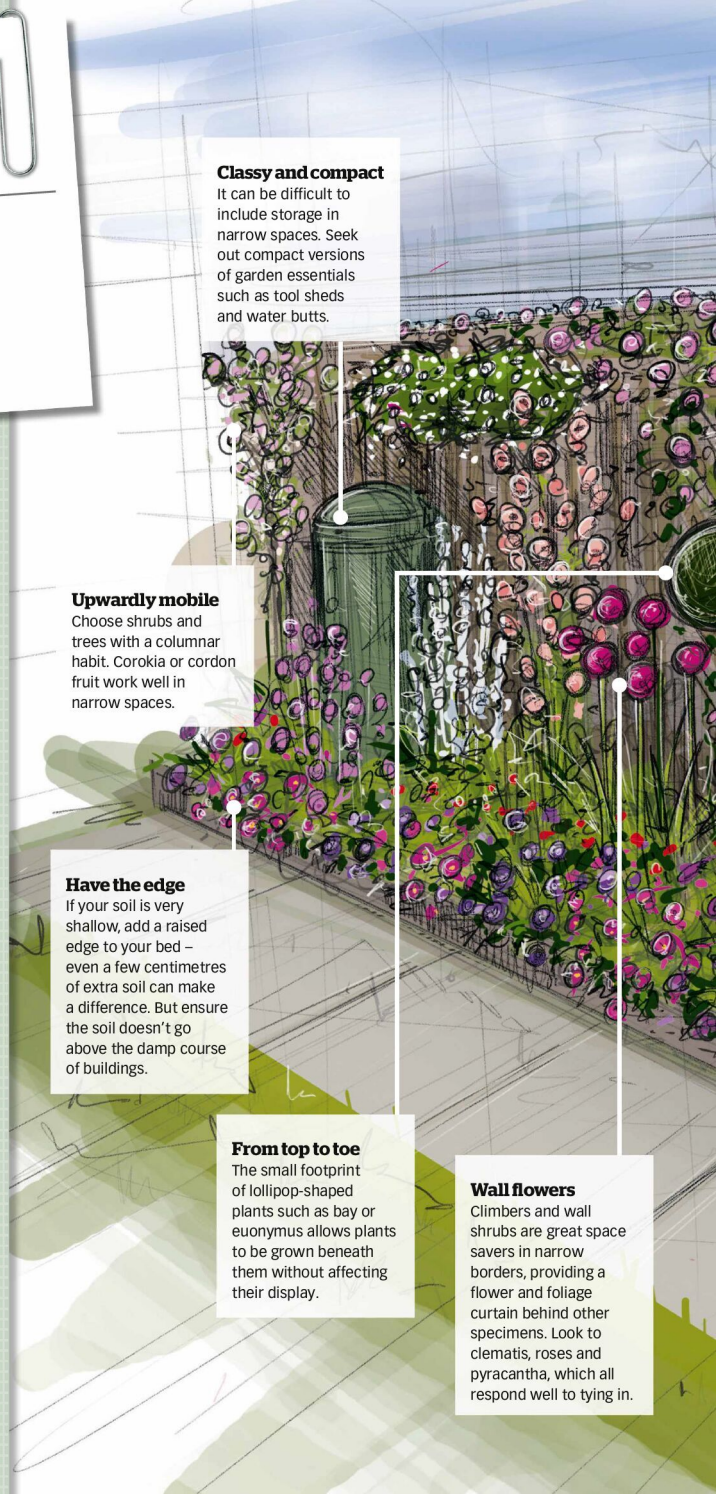
If your soil is very shallow, add a raised edge to your bed – even a few centimetres of extra soil can make a difference. But ensure the soil doesn't go above the damp course of buildings.

From top to toe

The small footprint of lollipop-shaped plants such as bay or euonymus allows plants to be grown beneath them without affecting their display.

Wall flowers

Climbers and wall shrubs are great space savers in narrow borders, providing a flower and foliage curtain behind other specimens. Look to clematis, roses and pyracantha, which all respond well to tying in.



Mirror images

Add depth to narrow spaces by using mirrors on exterior walls and buildings.

Heat retreat

Take advantage of the heat retained in walls by mounting attractive trellis and growing borderline-tender climbers such as the cup and saucer vine.

Space exploration

Make the most of the wall space and height by furnishing it with wall planters and hanging baskets.

Tower of strength

Getting height without width is easy to achieve if you use obelisks covered with annual climbers such as fragrant sweet peas.

Tall orders

Plant tall bulbs such as alliums or lilies so they emerge through low perennial plants. They have tiny footprints but lots going on up top.

Low and behold

Repeat low-growing plants such as hardy geraniums and ornamental strawberries along narrow beds to ensure a visual continuity that will link the planting.

Lofty ideals

Opt for tall, slender perennials such as verbena, hollyhocks and foxgloves. They grow in most conditions and readily self-seed.

Space-savvy garden plans

Raised beds

Ideal for growing everything from edibles to ornamentals, raised beds allow you to make the most of every inch of space, providing your plants with optimum conditions in the best aspect, even where the ground is poor.

The soil in raised beds will warm up earlier in spring, creeping weeds are kept at bay and the extra height can even thwart certain pests. Raised above ground level, your plants will be protected from passing feet and brought closer to hand for harvest and maintenance. Larger beds can even do double duty as occasional seating.

Fill a bed with acidic compost, and you can grow ericaceous plants in a garden with alkaline soil. Use a free-draining gritty mix for succulents or Mediterranean plants and they will settle in happily, or sit the frame directly on an area of paving and grow plants even where there is no open ground.

There are numerous styles of self-assembly or ready-made raised beds, in materials including timber, steel, plastic, willow hurdles and gabions. You can fashion a basic model yourself from old pallets, bricks or even straw bales. They all essentially do the same job but will suit different garden styles.

Height of elegance

Use tall, thin plants such as zinnias and perovskia that take up little space at their base but add height and interest to the display.

Pick and mix

Sow attractive veg such as 'Bull's Blood' beetroot or pretty salad leaves between ornamental plants.

Close encounters

Bring delicate plants closer to eye level where they can really be appreciated – try ice plants and alpinas.



Ground control

Certain plants such as periwinkles or Japanese anemones run wild in borders, but they can be easily contained in raised beds.

Early risers

Tuck in some spring bulbs to boost your display early in the year. Crocuses, dwarf narcissi and species tulips will all do well.

Trail blazers

Clothe the bed's walls with trailing plants, such as snow-in-summer (cerastium), trailing verbena and blue convolvulus.

Happy herbs

Raised beds are naturally free-draining – ideal for Mediterranean herbs like rosemary, lavender and sage.

Sitting pretty

Leave 'bottom-width' gaps between trailing plants to provide handy extra seating in a small garden.

Tend your timber

Timber laid directly onto the soil will rot over the years, so set timbers on a course of bricks at soil level or a concrete base.

Space-savvy garden plans

Vertical surfaces

When garden space is limited and every piece of ground is planted, the only way is up! Vertical gardening is the ultimate space saver for compact plots, providing maximum impact from a small or non-existent footprint.

Flanking high walls with year-round interest calls for a range of climbing plants, but these rampant scramblers are just a small element of a palette. Trailing plants, herbs, fan-trained fruit trees and quick-growing annuals can all play their part in sending the garden skyward.

Walls provide a great growing environment with their potential for heat retention and expanses of unused space, but beware - lofty landscapes can be tricky without the right planning. While walls retain heat, thus allowing tender species to thrive, this also means that pots will dry out more quickly.

There is also the issue of rain shadow, where the soil below walls is often powder dry. You can counter all of these issues with careful plant selection and diligent watering, or you can set up an automatic drip-irrigation system.

So, start making the most of your walls and get growing vertically - the sky really is the limit.

High standards

Soften walls while adding height and movement by allowing trailing ivy to tumble out of high-placed planters.

Lasting impression

Classic climbers such as roses and clematis thrive on walls while providing up to six months of flowers.

Picture perfect

Focus attention on wall-mounted plantings by highlighting them with old picture frames that have been painted to suit the scheme.

Open and shut case

Trellis, which is hinged from the wall at its base, can be folded out to allow easy climber and wall maintenance.



Hanging gardens

Epiphytic plants (that don't really grow in soil), such as bromeliads and ferns, can be mounted in summer onto walls, posts or rustic branches.

Vertical veg

Lots of trailing edibles, such as squashes and tomatoes, can be successfully grown down a vertical space.

Go with the flow

Wall pouches easily allow a façade to be flanked with flowers and foliage.

House warming

Espalier fruit trees will thrive in the shelter of a home's warm walls.

Pocketful of posies

Green walls can be easily created by using pre-fabricated panels – planting with heucheras and ferns works particularly well.

Social climbers

Summer climbers such as *ecremocarpus*, sweet peas or *cobaea* provide accents to a wall without encroaching on the space.

Maxed-out planting

Mangers or baskets can be hung or attached one above the other to maximise a wall's planting space.





Easy container gardening

Beautiful pots transform a garden, injecting instant colour and structure into patios, doorsteps and pathways.

Even if you have space for only one pot in the back garden or a window box at the front of the house, containers can still have a huge impact. There's a planting combination to suit every situation, from gloomy corners to sun-baked doorsteps - here are a few to get you started.



Easy containers for

Shady gardens

There are inspiring container combinations for every type of garden and every aspect. Embrace the shade with these bright ideas for lightening gloomy corners on the patio.

Fern favourite

Shade-loving plants often like damp conditions, and that's true of this stylish duo. The visual success of the display lies in its simplicity – the ferns provide the most interest, while the snake's head fritillaries create a striking focal point. The fritillaries will die down once they've flowered, but the ferns will keep the display going all year.

We used *Fritillaria meleagris* x 2, small ferns x 3, 30cm terracotta pot



Out of the blue

Many hydrangeas such as this 'Blue Danube' produce pink, mauve or blue flowers, depending on the soil type. For blue flowers, they need acidic soil or a pot of soil-based ericaceous compost.

We used *Hydrangea* 'Blue Danube' x 1, 45cm terracotta pot



Tip-top topiary

Using a wire or twiggy planting frame is the cheat's way of creating instant stylish topiary. Tie in the ivy to form a ball.

We used ivy x 2, Japanese lace fern x 1, yellow calibrachoa x 3, willow ball plant frame, 39cm terracotta long tom pot



Pretty in pink

A colourful glazed container is a simple way to brighten a shady spot. Keep things simple by using only two plant companions, both with bright pink blooms.

We used *Bergenia cordifolia* 'Winter Glow' x 2, *Saxifraga x arendsii* x 1, 30cm glazed pot



Flattering foliage

The foliage in this container bumps up the brightness. The golden heuchera leaves lift the display, contrasting in size with the delicate flowers of the viola.

We used *Heuchera* 'Electra' x 2, *Viola sororia* x 2, variegated ivy x 2, 30cm galvanised bucket



Charming camellias

Camellias light up the garden when they flower between early autumn and late spring with elegant blooms in white, pink or rich red. Their glossy leaves also provide year-round appeal. Give them ericaceous compost and water well with rainwater when the flower buds are forming in late summer. Position the pot in a sheltered spot in partial shade.

We used *Camellia sasanqua*

'Kenkyo' x 1, 45cm square glazed pot



Three degrees

Choose bleeding heart for its striking blooms that are guaranteed to turn heads. Its stems and foliage can look scrappy, so disguise them by underplanting with attractive foliage. We've chosen a variegated hosta to brighten the display, with ajuga to cover the bare soil and soften the container's edges.

We used *Lamprocapnos spectabilis* (see p38) x 1, *Hosta* 'Barbara Ann' x 3, *Ajuga reptans* 'Braunherz' x 2, 30cm terracotta pot

Easy containers for

Sunny patios

Bring vibrant colour to your patio, garden or entrance with pots that are perfect for a hot spot. These simple recipes will bring instant impact to a small space.

Black beauty

A black pot makes a wonderful foil for the pastel shades of these free-flowering clematis. The *isotoma* and *campanula* petals echo the colour and shape, while the *helichrysum* and *calocephalus* form a cloudy cushion at the base.

We used *Clematis* 'Countess of Wessex' x 1, *C.* 'Cezanne' x 1, *Verbena rigida* x 3, *Helichrysum petiolare* 'Silver' x 3, *Calocephalus* 'Silver Sand' x 3, *Isotoma* 'Blue Star' x 1, *Campanula poscharskyana* 'Nana Alba' x 2, 45cm black Versailles-style planter, wooden obelisk, painted black



Robust response

For gusty spots outdoors, choose plants that are robust. The flowers of ivy-leaved pelargoniums look delicate but are surprisingly sturdy in character, while the festuca adds movement and forms the backbone of the display.

We used *Festuca glauca* 'Elijah Blue' x 3, *Pelargonium* 'Supreme Burgundy' x 5, 45cm plastic window box



Mellow yellow

This container is perfect for a spot in sun or partial shade. The large leaves of coleus make an impact and create highlights of colour with the trailing *Bidens ferulifolia* that has intense, vibrant blooms.

We used *Euphorbia* 'Diamond Frost' x 1, *Bidens ferulifolia* x 2, *Tulbaghia violacea* 'Silver Lace' x 2, golden coleus x 3, 50cm terrazzo trough



Rosy future

As well as being border stalwarts, roses work beautifully in containers, which is perfect if you're short on space. Choose patio or bush varieties, as these will be more compact. Prune in early spring.

We used *Rosa* 'White Pet' x 1, 45cm white glazed pot



White delight

Whites, silvers and greys are a classic combination, with subtle dots of yellow from the centres of the cosmos blooms.

We used *Cosmos* 'Sonata White' x 2, *Helichrysum* 'Silver Mist' x 2, *Diascia* 'Whisper White' x 2, *calcecephalus* x 1, 30cm white glazed pot



Mixed doubles

Morning Glory provides a quick-growing exotic touch. Mix pink and purple varieties to provide accents of colour and interest. Use a terracotta pot and an obelisk or climbing frame.

We used Morning glory x 2, 40cm terracotta pot



Silver service

The silvery leaves of sage complement the grey container, while the lavender adds height and fragrance.

We used *Lavandula* 'Saviers' x 1, *Viola* 'Columbine' x 1, *Diascia* 'Whisper White' x 1, *Salvia argentea* x 1, 35cm square faux-lead container



Mediterranean medley

Create a fiery display for a sunny patio with orange blooms and plants that thrive in hot conditions. Aeoniums are real sun lovers and, although they originate in Mediterranean areas, they do well outside in a British summer. This purple variety provides a lovely contrast to the coreopsis and adds structure. The lychnis lends a shot of orange to lift the whole display.

We used *Coreopsis grandiflora*

'Early Sunrise' x 2, *Aeonium*
'Atropurpureum' x 1, *Lychnis* x
arkwrightii 'Vesuvius' x 1,
30cm terracotta pot



Cherry picking

Dahlia 'Matilda Huston' produces a succession of cherry-red flowers in July. Plant it with early summer performers such as *Briza media* or *argyranthemums*, which get going early and last long enough to complement the dahlia.

We used Dahlia 'Matilda Huston' x 1, *Briza media* 'Golden Bee' x 1, *Argyranthemum* 'Reflection Pink' x 1, A. 'Madeira Crested Merlot' x 1, 42cm terracotta pot



Cottage collage

This mix of traditional summer bedding creates a display that will produce flowers for months. Aim for a range of shapes, colours and textures.

We used dark red pelargonium x 1, pink and purple petunias x 3, dark pink busy Lizzies x 2, pale pink trailing lobelia x 1, 25cm glazed pot



Hot ticket

Perfect for a hot spot, bronze gazanias provide flower power, with sempervivum adding interest at the front of the display.

We used rosemary x 1, *Sempervivum* (houseleek) x 3, *Senecio cineraria* 'Silver Dust' x 4, *Gazania* 'Daybreak Bronze' x 6, 30cm terracotta window box

Containers

Design solutions

Containers play a vital role in a small space. They can be used to bring a boost of colour when border plants have faded or to add to existing displays. They can create focal points, be used to grow plants that need special conditions or to lead the eye down the garden and make your space seem larger. If used in the right way, containers can transform a small space. Here are some top tips on how to create maximum impact with them.



**Choose big containers**

Be bold in a small space. Use big containers as they allow you to grow larger, more striking plants that need less frequent maintenance. It's often better to have one large feature than a group of small ones.

Make more of ground space

If you're short on ground space try a tiered display stand, which makes an eye-catching feature and fits in more pots than you'd get on the ground. If you think of a garden as a box with just two planes, one horizontal and one vertical, available room soon runs out in a small space. Staging is a great way to increase the growing area.



Use pots of fragrance

Scent adds another dimension to a patio or back garden. Make more of seating areas by placing containers with fragrant plants near benches or tables. Or, plant a herb container near the kitchen doorway where it can be both pretty and useful for easy pickings.

Grow acid-loving plants in pots

Containers allow you to ring the changes when planting in a small garden. As well as using them to display plants that take up space in beds, you can grow plants that may not thrive in the ground, such as camellias or rhododendrons which need ericaceous soil.



Boost your displays

Plant up hanging baskets to extend the season into autumn or to give your garden a boost throughout the summer. Having extra colour up high will add another layer of interest.

Create illusion

Draw the eye down your garden by repeating a key element, such as a line of identical containers. This will help to make your space seem larger and create an attractive design feature at the same time.



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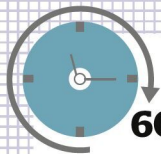
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60-minute project

Plant a permanent pot

An English rose entwined with clematis in a faded terracotta pot makes a lovely statement – perfect as a focal point on a terrace. The rich, velvety clematis is

equal to the regal scarlet tones of *Rosa* 'Suffolk'. Small pots of ivy cushion the rose and shade the clematis base, while nemesia adds another tint of purple.

You will need

- ☐ *Rosa* 'Suffolk' x 1
- ☐ *Clematis* 'Burma Star' x 1
- ☐ Variegated ivy x 8
- ☐ Blue nemesia x 2
- ☐ 50cm square terracotta pot
- ☐ John Innes No.3 compost and multi-purpose compost, moisture-retaining gel and fertiliser
- ☐ 4-6 wooden slats, bamboo stakes or pea sticks



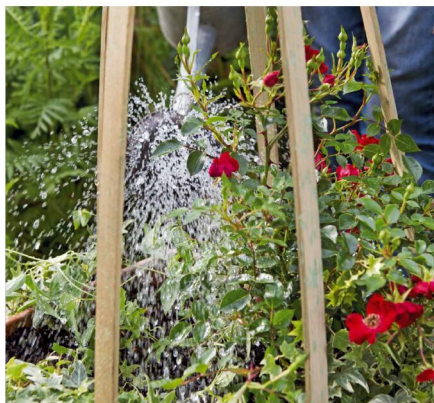
1 Fill the pot with a 2:1 mix of John Innes No.3 compost and multi-purpose compost to help support growth for a few years. Mix in moisture-retaining gel and some fertiliser. The compost level should be two-thirds full.



2 Plant the clematis in the centre of the container, with the crown 12.5cm below the soil, and place the rose at the front. Add the ivy and nemesia around the edges, then top up with more compost.



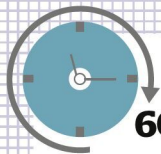
3 Insert the plant supports – wooden slats, bamboo stakes or pea sticks – deep into the compost. Tie the stakes securely together at the top to make a wigwam for the clematis to clamber up as it grows.



4 Water well and firm the compost. Encourage the clematis to climb the structure by tying stems to the stakes. Mulch with horticultural grit; keep moist and feed weekly in spring and autumn (but not during the main flowering period).



Keep the container plants well watered, especially during the summer months



60-minute project

A window box for shade

There are plenty of plants to brighten up a gloomy windowsill. We've used a galvanised planter to reflect available light and filled it with lush plants for a vibrant

feel. You'll find spider plants in the houseplant section of the garden centre (they'll do perfectly well outside in summer), while busy Lizzies will flower for months.

You will need

- ☐ Spider plants (*Chlorophytum comosum* 'Vittatum') x 3
- ☐ Busy Lizzie (New Guinea species) x 7
- ☐ Begonia Rex x 2
- ☐ 45cm galvanised planter
- ☐ Multi-purpose compost and slow-release fertiliser



1 Before you fill your container, make sure it has good drainage holes in the base to prevent waterlogging. Fill it with multi-purpose compost, lightly firming in the layers until the container is two-thirds full.



2 Add a measure of slow-release fertiliser granules to the container, which will give your plants all the nutrients they need through the summer months. Mix the granules thoroughly into the surface of the compost.



3 Add your plants one at a time, bearing in mind that the container will have a front and a back. Place the taller, plainer spider plants at the back and the shorter, flowering busy Lizzies and the begonias at the front.



4 Water the plants in well and top up with additional compost if necessary. Continue watering regularly during the summer months so the compost doesn't dry out, especially if the display is on a windy windowsill.



Deadhead the busy
Lizzies regularly to
encourage more flowers

Space-savvy garden plans

Brighter windowsills

Windowsills may not sound like the most promising growing environments, but by choosing suitable plants and containers these tiny spaces can bring a single window or a whole building to life with an exuberant display.

Bedding plants such as pansies and petunias are the mainstay of most window boxes. These vibrant plants have been bred to flower their socks off and they fulfil their role magnificently. But there are many other planting options, too. Herbs such as parsley and chives can be grown among tumbling tomatoes and chillies to turn any sunny window box into a living store of accessible edibles.

These miniature raised gardens offer endless opportunities, but they are not without their challenges - think battering winds, scorching heat and little natural rainwater. Still, with well-selected plants and diligent care, your windowsill can overflow with colour all year round.

Think big

Put bold, large-leaved plants at the back corners of a container to accentuate the full width of a window.

Light touches

Create movement with light-textured foliage that will mask, but not obscure, views out from indoors.

Flowing dialogue

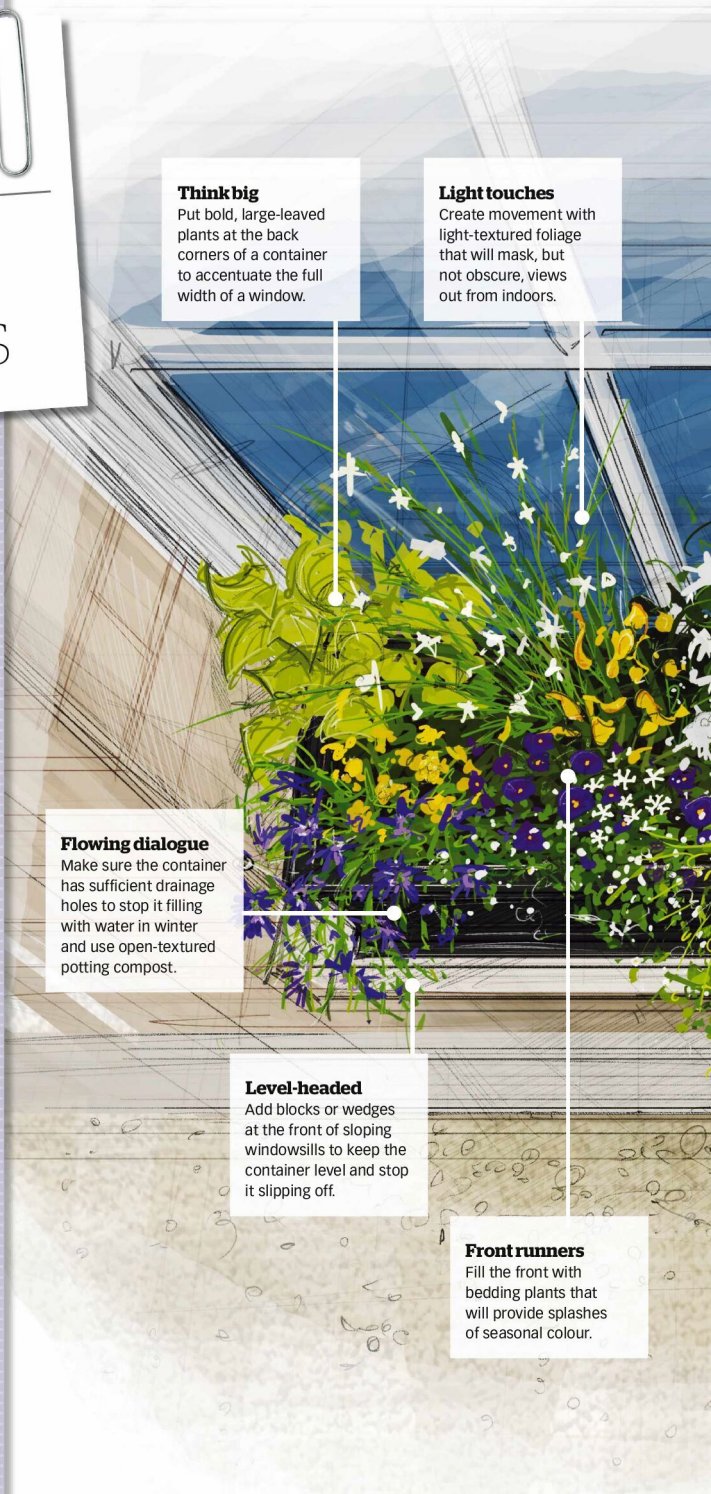
Make sure the container has sufficient drainage holes to stop it filling with water in winter and use open-textured potting compost.

Level-headed

Add blocks or wedges at the front of sloping windowsills to keep the container level and stop it slipping off.

Front runners

Fill the front with bedding plants that will provide splashes of seasonal colour.



Centre stage

Use taller plants near the centre of a window for an added sense of privacy indoors.

Food for thought

Include a few evergreen herbs for winter and summer edibles such as chillies and tomatoes.

Flower power

Choose single nectar-rich flowers that will attract bees and butterflies to provide more interest.

Hidden assets

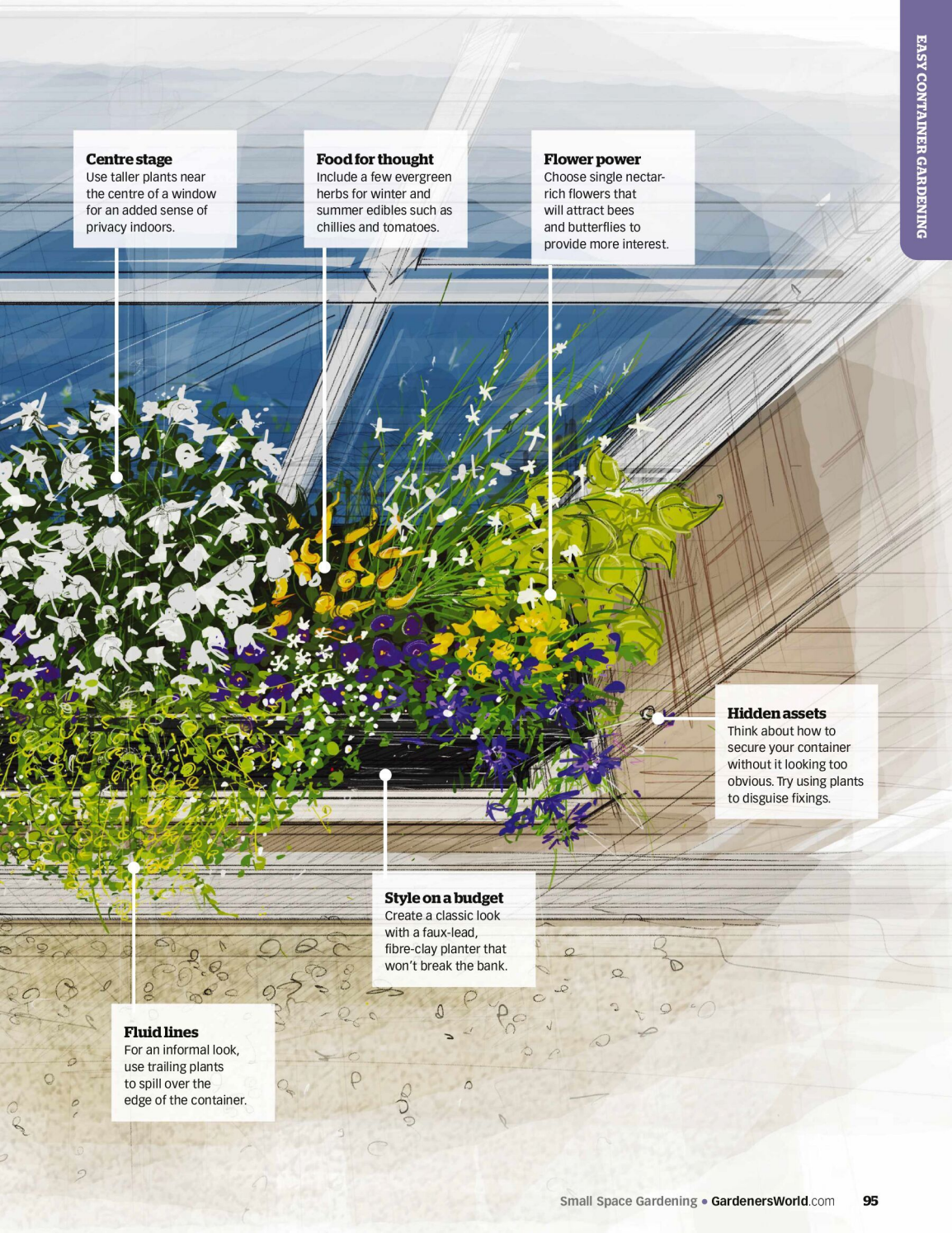
Think about how to secure your container without it looking too obvious. Try using plants to disguise fixings.

Style on a budget

Create a classic look with a faux-lead, fibre-clay planter that won't break the bank.

Fluid lines

For an informal look, use trailing plants to spill over the edge of the container.



Space-savvy garden plans

Balcony space

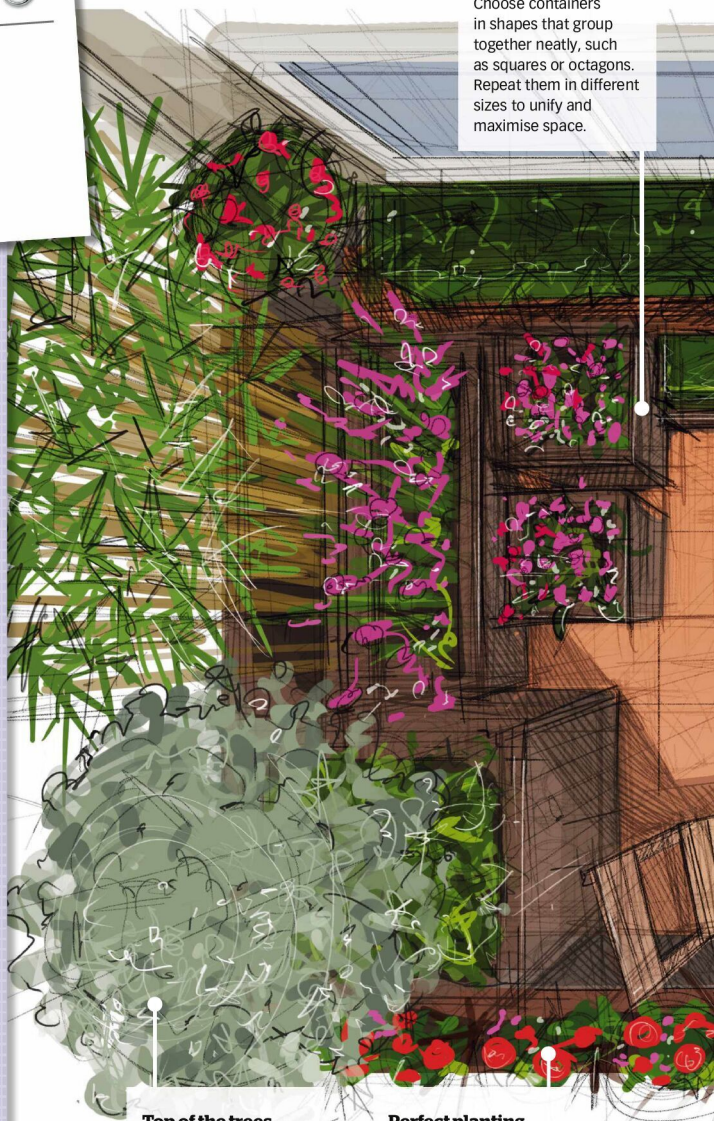
Despite their tiny footprints, balconies can become lush, colour-filled mini gardens with the right choice of plants, pots and furniture. But while they provide superb views and heat retention that can support borderline-tender plants, they're often marred by drying, battering winds, excessive heat, pollution and scant rainwater.

For these reasons, balconies suit compact plants that are heat and wind tolerant such as pelargoniums, lavenders and box, which will provide year-round foliage, structure and long seasons of flower. Succulents and compact, long-flowering perennials such as erigeron will also work well.

Try thinking in thirds: one third of evergreen structural plants; one third of long-season flowering plants; and the final third made up of inexpensive bedding plants. Balconies also require carefully considered spatial design. Choose pots that tessellate (group together neatly) to maximise space and flank walls with climbers and baskets. With all these factors in place, even the smallest balcony can perform 365 days a year.

Size wise

Choose containers in shapes that group together neatly, such as squares or octagons. Repeat them in different sizes to unify and maximise space.



Top of the trees

Compact trees such as well-pruned olives can thrive in large pots while providing dappled shade.

Perfect planting

Attach planters to railings and fill with long-flowering blooms such as pelargoniums, bacopa and nemesia.

Wake up walls

Furnish walls with verdant hanging baskets and scented climbers, such as *trachelospermum*, grown on trellis.

Neat ideas

Create storage solutions by utilising the space underneath raised planters on feet, or make your own with an integral cupboard.

Colour combos

Mix hot and cool colours to add visual depth to balcony plantings.

Forever green

Aim for at least one third of evergreen plants to ensure there's structure and colour all year.

Flexible furniture

Choose lightweight folding furniture that can be easily packed away to make room for planting or entertaining.

Herbal remedies

Mediterranean herbs such as lavender, rosemary and thyme will thrive in the hot, dry conditions of a balcony.

Screen test

Clump-forming bamboo such as *fargesia* will provide year-round screening, creating privacy on a balcony.

Space-savvy garden plans

Sunny patios

We ask a lot of our patios, especially considering that most are limited areas, but with careful design they can provide a host of growing opportunities, along with space to relax, dine, store, display and work. These enclaves have the potential to be the jewel in the crown of a garden, with growing and over-wintering space for tender or borderline-tender species and a wide range of specially bred container plants.

While heat-retaining patios may harbour microclimates, there are challenges. Heat retention in walls and containers can cause accelerated water loss and plant desiccation. Rain-shadow from other buildings can leave beds and planters bereft of rainwater, while high walls can cause wind turbulence to spiral across the space like a Tasmanian devil. But there are bedding plants, succulents, grasses, clematis and borderline-tender perennials that will lap up the heat and thrive.

Spatial design of these areas is very much down to taste, but with a few design tricks you really can make the most of every inch.

Open season

A pergola enhances the sense of an outdoor room while providing space for climbers and hanging baskets.

Heaven scent

Bring a fragrant air to your patio by growing night-scented plants such as night phlox and angel's trumpets.

Small talk

Compact edibles such as tumbling tomatoes, aubergines, chillies and herbs will thrive on a warm, protected patio.



Off the wall

Wall pouches are an inexpensive way of greening a vertical area. Usually planted with bedding, they can also house ferns (out of the heat) or trailing alpine.

Star performers

Create height, shade and scent by planting climbers such as jasmine, honeysuckle and trachelospermum.

Changing seasons

Hanging baskets can be replanted each season to provide colour and elegantly verdant trailing stems.

Shelf confident

Shelving provides the perfect 'theatre' to show off small alpines or compact bedding.

Equal standing

A ratio of around 50 per cent planting and furniture to 50 per cent paving/decking is ideal for most patios.

Inside knowledge

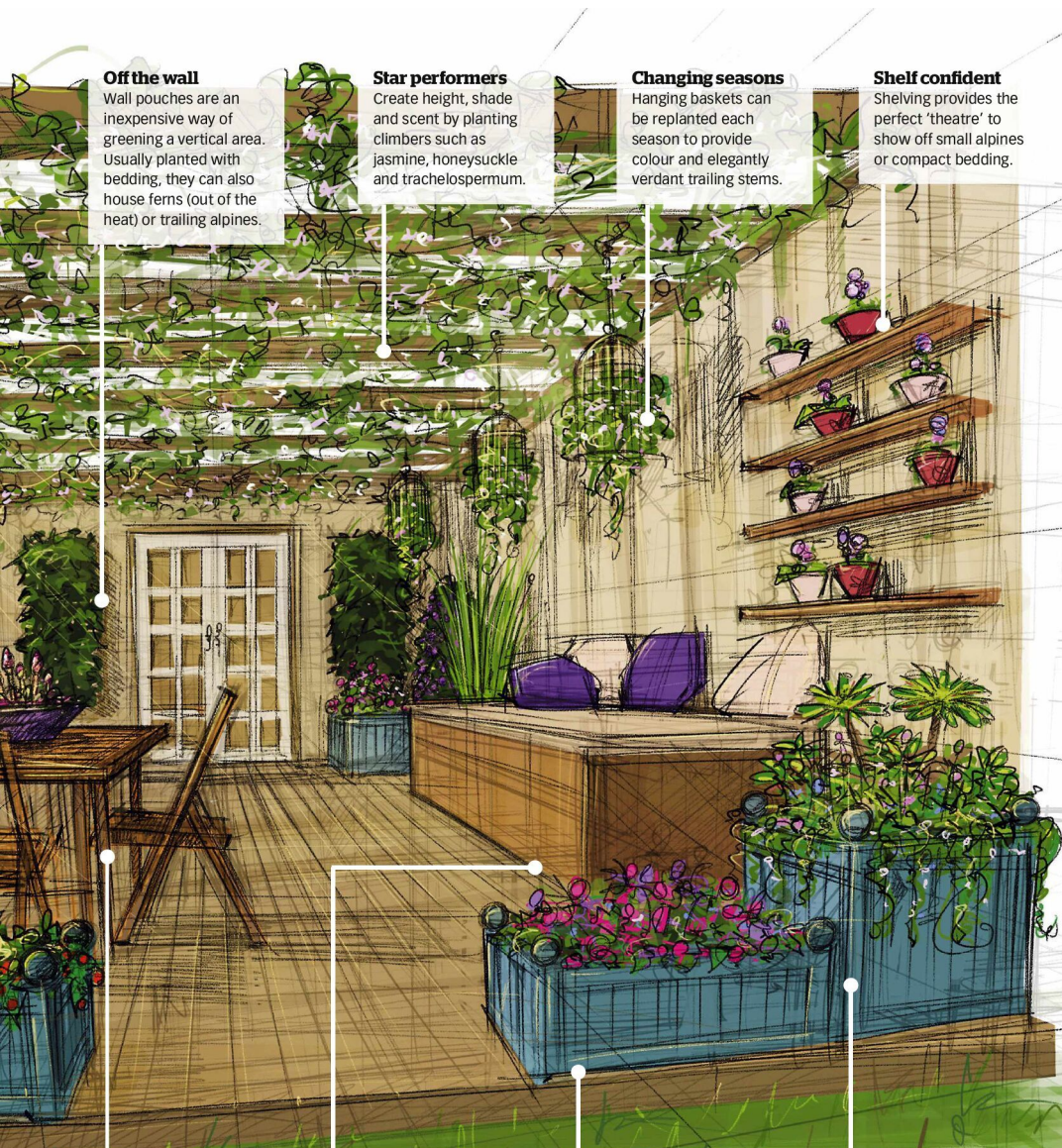
Make the most of your space by integrating storage into your benches, chairs and sun loungers.

Classic choice

Versailles planters suit both formal and cottage settings. Choose muted shades for a soft effect or bright colours for impact.

Side show

Show off dramatic drought-tolerant succulents such as echeveria or aeonium in well-drained containers.







Growing back-door crops

Anyone with a sunny windowsill or space for a pot at the back door can grow their own veg. You don't need a large garden – it's all about picking vegetables that suit your space and choosing compact varieties.

If you have a south-facing boundary, try vertical veg, like climbing beans, or for a patio pot, some tumbling tomatoes. It's best to avoid veg that takes up a lot of room such as maincrop potatoes or asparagus, or crops that take a long time to produce a harvest such as parsnips and leeks.

Top 10 for small spaces

Vegetables

We've picked 10 vegetables that are not only perfect for small spaces but also easy to grow. Get sowing in spring and you'll have bumper crops in no time, from runner beans that take up little ground space to quick-cropping radishes that will provide a harvest in weeks.

1

Beetroot

These healthy roots can be sown closely for lots of small, delicious crops. The edible, spinach-like leaves give you a double harvest. Sweet-tasting 'Boltardy' is a reliable variety, or there's 'Chioggia' with pink and white rings on the inside.

Sow March to July

Harvest May to September





2

Salad leaves

Salad leaves are perfect for pots, window boxes or raised beds. Choose a cut-and-come-again variety to make the most of your space. 'Cos Lettuce Mix' or 'Speedy Mix' are good varieties.

Sow March to September

Harvest May to October



3

Spring onions

These provide a quick harvest in just eight weeks. Sow successionaly for a continuous supply. They are easy to grow and give high yields in a small space. Try 'Apache' or 'White Lisbon'.

Sow February to September

Harvest March to October



4

Bush tomatoes

Avoid larger cordon and bush types and go for compact bush types. 'Tumbler' is ideal for pots or hanging baskets, or try 'Losetto'. Both are small and require no staking or pinching out.

Sow February to April

Harvest July to October



5

Mini carrots

Choose compact varieties of carrot – 'Little Finger' is very sweet and only about 10cm long. You could also try round carrots like 'Tonda di Parigi', which can be grown close together.

Sow March to July

Harvest June to October



6

Kale

Just one sowing will give pickings through winter to next spring. This is a hardy crop that comes in a range of shapes and colours. Try 'Dwarf Green Curled' for a more compact variety.

Sow February to May

Harvest January to April



7

Swiss chard

A fantastically hardy and easy crop, with leaves ready to harvest in just 10 weeks. Pick when young for salads or leave a bit longer and treat like spinach. 'Bright Lights' or 'Lucullus' are good varieties.

Sow March to August

Harvest February to October



8

French beans

Choose dwarf varieties such as 'Purple Teepee' for growing in pots, or climbing types such as 'Algarve' for growing up a trellis or fence. Keep picking when young to encourage further beans.

Sow April to July

Harvest June to October



9

Radishes

These are very easy to grow and crop in as little as four weeks. You can also sow them between other, slower-growing vegetables. Good varieties include 'French Breakfast' or 'Scarlet Globe'.

Sow March to September

Harvest April to October

10

Runner beans

Runner beans can be grown up trellis or wigwams to keep them under control. The dwarf runner bean 'Hestia' is small enough to grow in a container without becoming unwieldy and has pretty red and white flowers. Other dwarf beans include pink-flowered 'Millionaire' and red and white flowered 'Jackpot Mix'.

Sow April to July

Harvest July to September

Top 5 for small spaces

Fruit

Where space is tight, fruit can be the best option for growing your own. With compact varieties, dwarf rootstocks and a little basic pruning, you can grow a wide range of delicious fruits in a small garden or even in large containers on a patio.

1

Apples

A small tree won't take up much room if you choose one on a dwarfing rootstock. To save space, apples can also be trained as espaliers or cordons, where side branches are pruned back to the main stem to produce fruit. Pick a self-fertile or partially self-fertile variety such as 'Egremont Russet' or 'Red Falstaff'.

Plant November to March

Harvest September to November





2

Blueberries

These need acidic soil but are often grown in ericaceous compost in large pots, at least 60cm in diameter. Good varieties include 'Chandler' with giant fruits, or 'Ivanhoe', an abundant cropper.

Plant January to December

Harvest July to September



3

Strawberries

Ideal for growing in containers, plant five in a 45cm pot, or up to 10 in a growing bag. Plants should fruit well for three or four years. Try mid-season 'Cambridge Favourite' or late-season 'Florence'.

Plant March to October

Harvest June to October



4

Gooseberries

For ornamental effect, gooseberries can be trained as formal, standard specimens that look great in pots either side of a door. Choose spine-free varieties such as 'Xenia' or 'Pax'.

Plant October to March

Harvest July



5

Blackcurrants

This is one of the easiest fruits to grow, but allow to ripen fully on the bushes so they're as sweet as possible. Choose 'Ben Connan', which is a heavy cropper, or 'Ben Sarek' for compact plants.

Plant October to March

Harvest June to August



Top 5 for small spaces

Herbs

Herbs deserve a space in every garden - they don't take up much room and growing your own saves you money. Many perennials herbs such as thyme and sage are pretty as well as productive, while annuals such as basil and parsley add fresh flavour throughout summer.

1

Chives

A stalwart of the herb garden, chives are great for container growing as they don't take up much space and grow happily in a small pot, at least 13cm in diameter; they can also be grown on a windowsill. Pick regularly to encourage new leaves. The flowers attract pollinators.



2

Basil

Perfect for a small pot in a sunny spot outside, or sow directly into the soil once all frosts have passed. Likes well-drained, rich soil. Keep pinching out the plants to encourage new, bushy growth and to prevent flowering. Plants will be ready to harvest a couple of months after sowing.



3

Thyme

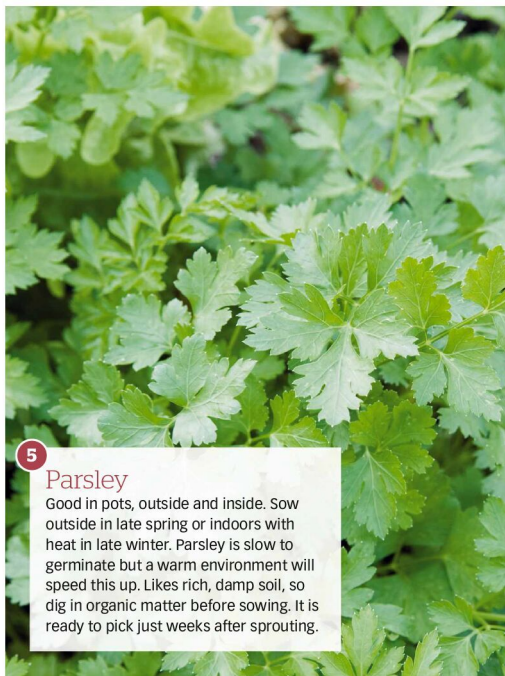
The leaves can be dark green, golden yellow or variegated. The growth habit varies from those that creep along the ground to those that form an upright bush, and many have white, pink or lilac flowers in summer. It is an evergreen perennial so can be picked all year round.



4

Sage

An essential in any herb garden, sage not only adds flavour and aroma when used in cooking, it also provides year-round interest in the garden. It produces wonderful, textured leaves and attractive flowers that can vary from intense blue to magenta pink or cream.



5

Parsley

Good in pots, outside and inside. Sow outside in late spring or indoors with heat in late winter. Parsley is slow to germinate but a warm environment will speed this up. Likes rich, damp soil, so dig in organic matter before sowing. It is ready to pick just weeks after sprouting.

Top 10 for small spaces

Veg in pots

A lack of space isn't an obstacle to growing your own feast of vegetables. Many crops thrive in pots, and compact varieties are being launched all the time. It's amazing how many types of veg grow happily in pots, from salad leaves and herbs to climbing beans, peas and tomatoes.



1

Time for a bath

Many winter vegetables can't be grown in containers as they need too much space, but kale and chard are perfect for pots and will provide pickings all winter. Combine with oriental leaves such as pak choi that enjoy similarly shady conditions. Asparagus peas, covered in brick-red flowers, add colour – the pods can be harvested young for salads.

We used Kale 'Nero di Toscana' x 3, Pak choi 'Purple' x 6, Asparagus pea plants x 8, approx. 70cm tin bath



2

Packed to perfection

Containers packed with veg are both attractive and productive. Opt for the biggest you can find and choose veg that grows happily together.

We used Cavolo nero kale x 1, Runner bean 'Hestia' x 1, Beetroot 'Bull's Blood' x 1, 55cm square wooden crate



3

Compact courgettes

Compact varieties of courgette such as 'Venus' or 'Midnight' will crop all summer if you keep picking. Combine with nasturtiums for an attractive display.

We used Courgette 'Venus' x 1, red flowering nasturtium 1 x, 40cm metallic pot



4

Hot pot

Chillies come in an array of shapes, sizes and colours; some even bear different coloured fruit on the same plant. Grow in a sheltered, sunny spot. A terracotta pot will keep the roots at an even temperature.

We used Dwarf Chilli 'Nasu' x 1, 45cm terracotta pot



5

Heat and herbs

Chillies need weekly potassium feeds once they start to flower. Pick frequently to get more fruits. The onion is planted to repel aphids. Mint also deters pests.

We used Chilli 'Paper Lantern' x 1, Chilli 'Numex Twilight' x 1, Welsh onion x 3, mint x 2, oregano x 2, 60cm long tub



6

Shade lovers

Leafy veg and salad leaves prefer a cool, shady spot. Keep picking for new leaves.

We used Telsel greens x 6, Komatsuna x 6, Mustard 'Green in Snow' x 6, Kale 'Red Russian' x 3, Radicchio 'Palla Rossa' x 3, Beetroot 'Bull's Blood' x 6, 75cm fibreclay trough



7

Speedy salad mix

Fast-growing veg such as salad leaves and spring onions crop quickly, so you can make several sowings in a season.

An old Belfast sink is an ideal container.

We used Mixed salad leaves 'Bright & Spicy' x 6, Spring onion 'White Lisbon' x 12, 60cm Belfast sink



8

Full of beans

Broad beans are perfect for pots if you choose compact varieties. Sow six to eight seeds in a 45cm pot. To prevent blackfly and to help the pods swell, pinch out the shoot tips.

We used 'Statissa' x 5, or try 'The Sutton', 45cm terracotta pot



9

Windowsill veg

Make the most of every space and you can produce a crop, even on a windowsill. With just a few pots you can grow a range of salad leaves, lettuce and radishes.

We used Lettuce 'Lollo Bionda' x 2, mixed oriental leaves x 2, mixed mizuna x 2, 15cm terracotta pots

10

Tons of tomatoes

Tomatoes grow well in pots on a sunny patio. Choose a bush variety, as they stay compact without the need for tall supports – and you don't have to pinch out the side shoots. We used 'Maskotka', which is also resistant to cracking. Basil is not just the perfect pairing for tomatoes in cooking, it also relishes the same growing conditions. Add edible flowers such as zingy orange calendula to pep up the colour and attract pollinating insects.

We used Tomato 'Maskotka' x 1,
Basil 'Red-leaved' x 6, Calendula 'Daisy
Mixed' x 6, 28cm round terracotta pot



Back-door crops

Growing solutions

Your garden may be small, but that doesn't mean it can't be pretty and productive. Seek out small varieties, often sold as mini or patio veg, which allow you to pack more into the space. Fill the gaps between crops with annual flowers - they'll provide colour and encourage beneficial insects to visit. Start brassicas, beans and salad leaves in modules, then when one crop has finished in the garden you can fill the hole with a plug plant that's raring to go.





Keep pests at bay

Basil and tomatoes make good growing and eating companions. Not only does basil help to keep pests such as aphids at bay it is also said to improve the flavour of the tomatoes it grows alongside. If you're growing vegetables in containers, look for bright, colourful pots that will brighten up a table top or patio corner, such as this red enamel planter.



Make a planting plan for veg beds

It's important that vegetables don't look cluttered in a small space. Draw up a planting plan in the same way you would for an ornamental bed. Combine different varieties in neat rows or grids and think about varying heights and textures with climbing veg and herbs such as sage, which make good edging. There's no need to worry about crop rotation in a small space, but do change the compost.



Choose colourful varieties

Vegetables don't have to be green. There's the ubiquitous but lovely 'Bright Lights' chard and canary-yellow courgettes, like 'Taxi'. Or try the hot-pink new growth of tree spinach, dark, metallic 'Bull's Blood' beetroot and purple 'Redbor' kale. There's also cerise 'Devil's Tongue' lettuce, marbled red 'Bingo' climbing beans and patriotic red-and-white-flowering 'St George' runner beans. And that's just for starters!



Use every inch of space

Every inch matters, and hanging pots, guttering along a fence or wall-mounted containers can all help to eke out your growing space. Guttering is shallow and dries out quickly, so use it for baby leaves with shallow roots – try lettuce, spinach, basil and coriander, oriental greens and peas for shoots. Aim to have two sets of guttering on the go, so you're cropping from one while seedlings grow on in the other.

Aim high with climbing veg

You might have run out of space on the ground, but there's plenty above. Try climbing beans, squashes and cucumbers. The plants will take time to clothe their supports, so look for attractive materials, or paint bamboo canes to turn them into a feature. Your supports could also be living – a vigorous bean will happily climb a sunflower or sweetcorn. Let these grow to 30cm or more first before sowing beans below them.

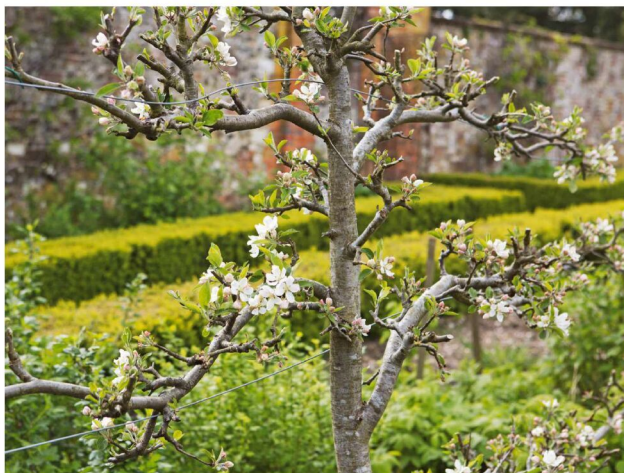


Plant up your front garden

If your back garden is bursting at the seams, expand into the front. Although shade cast by buildings, poor soil and exhaust fumes need to be considered, a thick hedge or brick wall will keep a fair bit of pollution at bay. If it's a shady spot, try shade-tolerant perennial greens; for a south-facing spot, grow a pot of tomatoes.

Grow espalier fruit

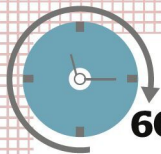
Espalier apples or pears growing in a small garden is an attractive solution if you want to grow fruit but lack ground space. For the best chance of a bumper crop, plant several trees next to each other along a wall or fence to improve pollination. This will also create a striking and productive boundary.



Make a feature of crops

Crops can be fitted in all over the garden, from flowerbeds to wall planters and feature containers. Try vibrant dark red lettuce next to flowering alliums, little lettuces and globe artichokes as edging, herbs and salads spilling out of hanging planters, or purple Brussels sprouts that stand like trifids among flowers. The only crop that doesn't work in borders are onions, which don't like being overcrowded.





60-minute project

Get salad crops all summer

Salad seed has **hundreds** of seeds in each packet. The trick to keeping your crops coming is sowing the right combination of quick cut-and-come-again and slower,

bulkier varieties, so you can keep harvesting. Sow successionaly every few weeks from April to October and use two pots or more to keep your harvest going.

You will need

- ☐ 2 x 30cm plastic containers
- ☐ Multi-purpose compost
- ☐ Watering can
- ☐ Mix of salad seeds, including some fast and some slow growers



1 If your pots are new, make sure they have drainage holes before filling with compost – if they don't have any, drill some holes in them. Fill one of the containers with compost, breaking up any lumps. Water well so that it settles.



2 Make thin drills (a kebab skewer is ideal) to help you space the seeds evenly while sowing. Sow thinly – remember, you want your seed supply to last until autumn. Take note of any guidelines on the packet in addition to this step-by-step guide.



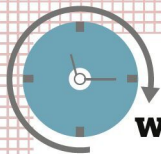
3 Cover the seeds with a thin layer of compost, then water well. Label the container with the variety and sowing date. After the first harvest, it's best to refresh the top 5-10cm layer of compost in each container before sowing the next pot.



4 In week one, sow one container with the quickest of the fast-growing crops (such as 'Lollo Rossa' lettuce). Sow the other pot a couple of weeks later and keep sowing successionaly through the summer to keep the crops coming.



Pick the leaves regularly
to encourage a succession
of fresh new growth



weekend project

Sow a square-metre veg bed

If you think growing veg needs lots of space, think again. 'Square-metre gardening' involves sowing crops closer than usual and replacing each crop with a

different one as soon as it's harvested, meaning it produces maximum yield in the minimum space. A raised bed is easiest, as it helps to define a plot clearly.

Plants to try

- ☐ Beetroot
- ☐ Carrots
- ☐ Chard
- ☐ Courgettes
- ☐ Dwarf French beans
- ☐ Garlic
- ☐ Mizuna greens
- ☐ Pak choi
- ☐ Rocket
- ☐ Shallots
- ☐ Spring onions
- ☐ Turnips



1 Divide your bed into a 16-square grid, each 25cm by 25cm, with twine. The layout may change as the season progresses but the twine won't get in the way of your crops. Sow seeds inside each square, with the same space around each seed.



2 Water well. Growing in concentrated squares focuses your attention, making it easy to keep on top of the crops' needs. As the plants fill out they shade the soil, reducing evaporation, so you have to water less often than with traditional spacings.



3 The number of plants in each square will differ, depending on the crop. Large ones, like courgettes, will eventually use more than a square, but in the meantime use the space for faster-growing crops. To work out how many seeds to sow in a square, check the thinning distance on the packet then sow a little closer.



4 Aim to harvest crops such as beetroot, turnips and carrots when they are young and, crucially, don't take up too much space in the bed, and keep picking salad leaves to encourage more growth. Once a harvest is over, you can sow a different crop in that square.



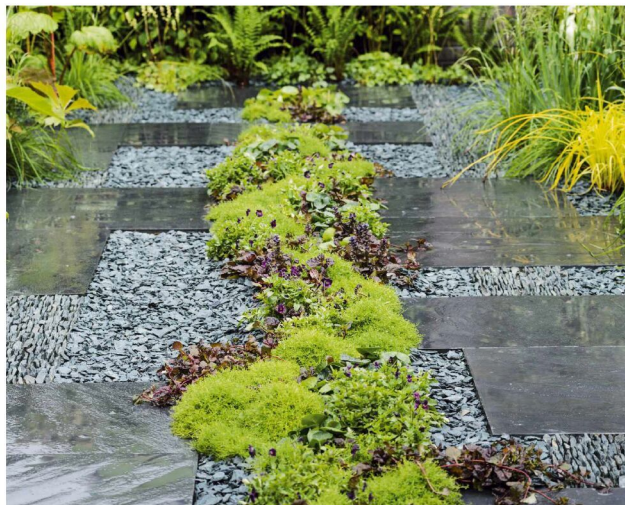
Larger crops, like courgettes, will eventually take up more than one square as they grow





Your questions answered

Gardening in a small space is a balancing act between fitting in the practical elements you need, such as water butts, compost bins and storage, and making it look attractive. Discover easy solutions to planting queries, as well as answers to some common practical problems, whether it's finding out how to improve a dull driveway with plants or how to disguise a garden building or an unattractive water butt. Find out how composting is possible in a small garden and ways to fit more tools into your shed.



Q How can I improve the look of my driveway?

A A paved parking area need not be sterile. Plant hardy, low-growing ground cover such as chamomile or ajuga (with improved drainage) in the central area in between the tyre tracks and have some grasses or low-growing hardy shrubs on either side of the tyre tracks to soften the look of the driveway paving.

Q How do I get the best crops from pot-grown fruit?

A Always choose a dwarfing rootstock appropriate for container growing and give your tree or bush the biggest container you can – at least 45-50cm in diameter. Pots should be frostproof with good drainage. Pot on every other year in February until the tree is in its final pot. After this, root prune every other year and replace 30 per cent of the compost. In alternate years, top dress with fresh compost.

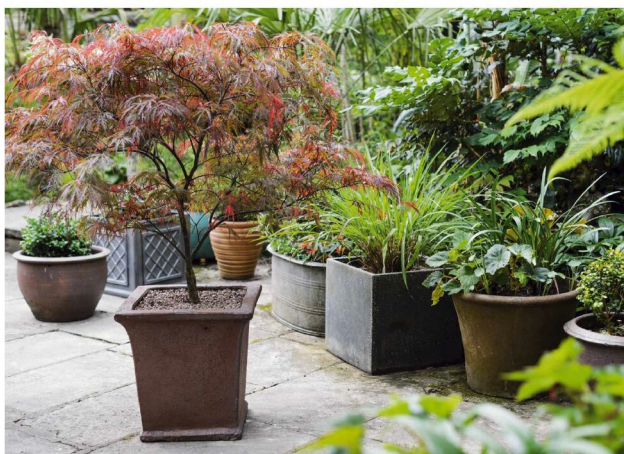


Q What can I replace my lawn with?

A If your garden is too small for turf, go for a low-maintenance alternative. Try herbs, which are resilient and low-growing. Chamomile (above) may need a light trim but most others, such as thyme, can be left alone. Level the ground to stop it getting waterlogged and dig a large enough hole to let each plant's roots spread out, loosening the soil at the base to stop water collecting and causing rot.

Q Will trees grow in pots?

A Most trees can be grown in pots for a limited period, but slow-growing, dwarf or compact specimens such as Japanese maples are the most suitable. Water regularly, as compost dries out quickly, and feed every spring. Repot every few years to replace spent compost and give the roots more room, otherwise the tree will become root-bound and stressed.



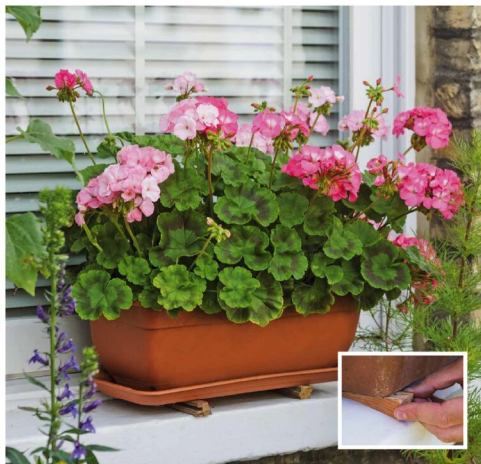
Q What's the best foliage for a small, shady garden?

A Hostas look striking in a small space. Try those with white or yellow stripes to help lighten the look, such as 'Frances Williams' with its large grey-green leaves margined with butter yellow, or 'Barbara Ann' (pictured). Or you could choose something like *Lamium maculatum* 'Beacon Silver' – great ground cover, with silver-grey leaves that can bring light to a shady corner.



Q My water butt looks ugly. How can I disguise it?

A The simplest way is to sit a container on top, planted up with a species that will thrive there. For a semi-shady spot, try an evergreen carex or golden hakonechloa (shown here) and water it whenever you use the butt. For a fuller disguise, you could create a screen of potted ferns or make a trellis on which you can grow ivy or other climbers.

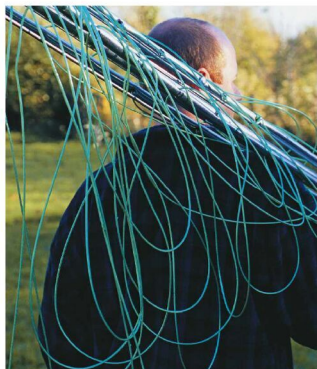


Q How do I secure a window box on a windowsill?

A If your window box is above ground level it must be fixed to the windowsill using permanent brackets to avoid any risk of it falling off. If the sill slopes down, insert small wooden wedges under the front edge of the window box – one at each end – to keep the box level. If it's a large window box, put one in the centre, too. You could also attach screw eyes or hooks to the window frame and wire the planter in place.

Q Is it worth composting in a small space?

A Composting in a small space isn't as fast or productive as composting on a larger scale – the high temperatures in big heaps speed up the breakdown process considerably. But it's well worth doing. It takes longer but it's possible to generate good quantities, even in a small space. Treat yourself to an attractive closed bin such as a timber beehive one that will look stylish all year round.



Q What type of washing line would best suit a small garden?

A A retractable washing line, which can be wall- or post-mounted and provide more than 30m of drying space, is an excellent choice as you can wind the line out of sight when it's not being used. Alternatively, try a rotary airer on a tripod base or ground spike, which can be folded neatly away.

Q What's the best way to disguise a shed or garden building?

A If you have room for a shed, reduce its impact by camouflaging it with plants – give it a 'green' roof, and attach wires to support climbers such as roses or clematis, which will scramble up the sides. Try also painting it a dark shade to help it blend into the background.



Q How can I disguise my wheelie bins?

A Although wheelie bins are a necessity, they are drab. Pretty up the area using a bin store with space for planting on top. Sedum and alpines are hardy and low maintenance, while annuals add colour. There are plenty of off-the-peg timber bin stores and screens, but why not make a simple timber frame and cover it with a mini 'green' roof. Or plant it with houseleeks and sedum so you won't have to water it. Insects will love it and it will look good all year.



Q What's the best way to store tools?

A When space is limited you don't want tools and equipment cluttering up the garden or a shed dominating what little room you have. Box benches with in-built storage are great places to stash toys and smaller tools, or use hooks (below) to streamline your tools and save shed space for other gardening equipment.



Q Do you have any storage ideas for a tiny shed?

A Make use of the undersides of the shelves to double your storage space. Use clear jam-jars and you won't have to label them. Wash and dry the jars first, and use two screws to secure the lids to the underside of the shelf, then twist on the jars.



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