

Create space
for entertaining,
family or relaxation



Ideas for Outdoor Designs

INSPIRATION



A guide to
creating a
useable
outdoor
space

LIFESTYLE

BASICS

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PLANTS

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Plants

1 – Shape
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Plants in Design

Do you have any areas you would like to screen from view? Would you like to grow plants you can eat? What is the ultimate purpose for adding plants into your garden design?

As well as considering the colour of plants created by their flowers, leaves, bark or fruits, consider some variety in texture and form, to give the garden depth.



Basics

It can be easier to pull together a planting design by breaking it down into smaller parts. Using plants helps to break up harsh manmade lines and hard materials.

Consider the maintenance at the beginning. Many perennials need to be divided every few years or they will start to die out. What will you realistically have time to do and when would you likely do it, summer?

Work out the soil that you have and be prepared to recondition it before planting. You may have an average pH level and loam soil or a hard clay soil.

Each soil type has its advantages and disadvantages but ultimately will affect the list of plants you can choose from.

Note down the gardens areas of shade and areas with full sun. Plants have certain conditions they like to grow in and this will narrow your choice.

With the ever growing number of plants to choose from, to ensure you create a sustainable and long lasting design the more you narrow your choice the better.

You can always extend, add to and develop as the year's progress and as existing plants grow and die.

Design

The traditional English garden includes lawn areas flanked by flower borders, the Dutch however tend to have small front gardens that are planted up completely.

To create a workable garden border with enough room for most plants to grow comfortably the width should be no less than 1/3 the length.

Small borders however tend to look better with a 1 to 2 ratio and deep borders or using irregular shapes with curving lines tend to look less like an edge.

There is no need to stick with what you already have. The essence of good design is the ability to see new possibilities amongst the pre existing structures.

With the exception of trees, it is usually easier to remove pre-existing plants than to design around them. You can however save the plants and incorporate them into your new design, move them to another area or give them to a friend.

There are a number of ways to introduce plants into your design through borders, island beds, around features or structures, along or in walls, over rocks, in raised beds or containers.

Being adventurous often means breaking with tradition. It is up to you, your level of confidence and your overall needs for the outdoor space which will determine the overall design.

Plants

Do you prefer pastels over hot colours or a theme, such as fragrance? Would you prefer an actual style, like cottage or woodland?

Make a list of the plants you like which are right for your garden conditions and group them by colour, texture and form.

Also list plants by season of bloom and/or interest. Consider both flowers and foliage. Experiment with green foliage plants.

Green has healing qualities helping us to relax as it is the most balanced colour in the spectrum. There are many shades of green with the darker shades creating depth in a garden and a good backdrop for lighter shades.

The lighter more yellow shades energise a space and silvery sage greens contrast well with pinks or mauves.

Include some large anchor plants (shrubs mainly evergreens) that will look good all year. These also provide the structure of the planting design and need to be placed wisely so they will not need constant moving around.

By adding focal plants that catch the eye and bedding, bulbs and herbaceous plants to fill the gaps you have the basics of a mixed planting style design.

Limit your plant choices to 2 or 3 colours and just 5 different types of plants. By sticking to a planting combination of 3 of each plant type you have 15 plants to be working with already.

If you want your garden to look mature or full in its first year, you will need to space larger young plants more closely or buy more mature plants. You will get an immediate impact, but this will cost a lot more.

If you have a smaller budget place smaller young plants with space around them and give them time to grow slowly. You can fill in the gaps temporarily with annuals.

Space

The smaller the garden space 'less is more'. If you choose to use a large, focal point plant consider the proportions of the surrounding features.

By using neat and compact conifers a small garden has instant and permanent structure. As they tend to suck moisture from the ground the plants you select to surround them must like dry conditions.

Also a small space will look cluttered fast if there is too much diversity in colour, form and texture. Grouping plants in 3's or 5's is one way of creating visual impact without overpowering a space.

Larger spaces can expand on the numbers of plant types but still work well if a limited colour pallet is used. By planting plants in long drifts as in cottage or naturalistic planting designs your eye can be lead through the space to specific views or features.

It is however still down to personal taste, trial and error as well as suitable growing conditions. Even the best laid plans and perfect soil preparation can't guarantee every plant will grow as planned.

'Plants in Design' has been created as a starting point of information and ideas to help you make the most of your outdoor space.

Gardens123 would like to thank you for your interest in our free guide and would like to take this opportunity to highlight a few more of our products and services.

Free Guides

Please browse all our booklets in this series for more garden design inspiration. We hope you will find these booklets useful as we are looking to increase this inspiration range further so keep checking for the latest booklets.

Concept Consultations – (£45 consultation fee)

If you need design guidance, a little inspiration or a friendly chat about how to use your outdoor space to its advantage, book a visit with our Landscape designer.

By mixing your ideas and enthusiasm with the designer's passion and skills, a concept vision for your garden can be created in an hour's consultation.

Concept Designs – (start at £160) as of Dec09 subject to change see website

These designs are created specifically if you have strong ideas for your space and know the materials you would like to use or you have existing features needing simple makeover revamp.

Layout Designs – (start at £320) as of Dec09 subject to change see website

This design process has been created if you have a small garden and just need a contractor to 'do the tricky bits' e.g. paving.

Further Services

Gardens123 offer a range of different garden design and construction services to suit your needs. We also offer gift vouchers for that unusual gift.

Visit **www.gardens123.co.uk** for more information.

Gardens123 hope you have found this guide interesting. We wish you all the best with your design ideas and look forward to hear from you again soon.