

Van Hage Garden Article

DESIGN 'Plan the Garden of Your Dreams'

As spring sap raises and excites imaginative gardening ideas within us, take time to sketch out schemes and jot down ideas for the summer garden of your dreams.

Something for Everyone...

Gazebos, garden rooms, BBQ's and tree houses offer places of relaxation and entertaining, while a discreet study / office provides an escape from distractions in the home. When designing your outdoor space, think of your garden as just another room needing similar consideration to those indoors. List out your requirements for an eating area, resting, sunbathing and recreation – as many 'wishes' as you dare and have fun teasing them to fit the design.

Principles of Style...

Rough stone walls and timber fences, sleek modern lines or Colonial comfort – pick your style and make it reality. Jumping from whim to fancy will cause a miss-match of ideas that is un-restful on the eye, so focus on your dream and stick with it.

A Passion for Perennials and Grasses...

Those with a serious love of plants won't be able to resist perennials and grasses. Used together, they form one of the most natural planting combinations. High summer colour in every imaginable shade, plus fluid movement and constant animation. Combine planting with seating to get the most from your garden.

Painters Palette of Colours...

All things bright and beautiful – or not? What ever your taste in colours, there are plants to suit. Add glamour with strict two-colour planting, such as cool lemon and lilac or deep blue and orange – repeat over and over again to reinforce a cohesive message. Alternatively, a riot of colour is fun in spring, or serious monochrome white for classic chic.

High Impact...

Key shapes stand out in the crowd. Aim to have at least two or three within the entire garden, preferably not all visible at the same time. A dramatic 'urn' shaped pot or imaginative sculpture will be just as striking in mid-winter as high summer, though its supporting cast and tempo will have changed. Likewise, planting can be just as dramatic when used to bold effect, highlighting the contrast between swaying grasses and spiky evergreen foliage.

Gravel Gardening...

For a change of tempo in the modern or 'naturalistic' garden, try deep digging fine

shingle into sun-baked parched earth. When planted with arid-loving, Mediterranean and desert-style plants, this area will brim with spiky biennial *Eryngium giganteum* 'Miss Willmott's Ghost', bun-shaped hummocks of silvery-grey sage, *Santolina* and lavender.

Seasonal Delights...

When we think of 'garden plants', our thoughts automatically turn to flowers, but don't forget that bark, stems and leaves are just as important.

To celebrate the changing seasons, choose planting to suit. Even the smallest garden can enjoy a tree; providing colour and interest over the passage of time; striking displays of blossom in spring to brilliant autumn foliage, eye-catching bark and berries into winter. Trees also provide all-important privacy from neighbours, plus food and habitat for wildlife.

Entertaining can move 'indoors' with a sunny garden room or canopied dining area, and add imaginative outdoor lighting to set the entire garden ablaze and turn night into day.

Perfect Partners...

Don't forget pots – combining the perfect plant with the correct container is a fun art to master. Choose plants to match the setting and a container that shows the plant off to best advantage.

And after all this fun playing around with ideas – don't forget to take time out to sit in your garden – position a seat and enjoy the best views.

IN THE GARDEN THIS WEEK...

- Begin feeding your pot plants. Water fortnightly with a soluble plant food or apply a single application of slow-release granular feed that'll last for up to 6 months.
- Start Begonia and Gloxinia tubers in readiness for summer flowering. Maintain a constant 12°–15° C (55°–60° F) in the greenhouse or cool spare room, spacing into trays filled with pre-moistened compost. Keep slightly moist until growth appears.
- Likewise, Canna and Dahlia tubers will grow into sturdy, early-flowering plants if potted up and started in the greenhouse ahead of planting out at the end of May.
- Mulch beds and borders with well-rotted manure or homemade compost for nutritious soil and healthy plant growth.