

Brits interest in gardening soars as we prepare to welcome guests into our gardens



Chris Beardshaw, garden designer, TV presenter and author reveals his tips for plants, flowers & quick-fix garden ideas to wow friends and family this season.

Interest in gardens and outdoor spaces has grown significantly over the past year as we have potted, planted, weeded and seeded our way through the pandemic. The trend looks set to continue as many people prepare to welcome friends and family into their homes and gardens for the first time in months this season.

[Readly](#) digital subscription service reports that its gardening category has more than doubled in recent months with a 104% increase. Hedge trimmer, flower box and garden shades were the top three most searched items across its much-loved category. According to new YouGov research, over a quarter (28%) of us have taken up or revisited our gardening skills in the past year with two thirds (65%) having potted plants or flowers, almost two thirds (60%) planting vegetables and herbs and nearly a third (31%) landscape gardening. The biggest increase was in the 40-49 year old age group.

With the unseasonal weather this spring and gardens set to welcome friends and family, Chris Beardshaw, Garden Designer, TV Presenter & Author reveals his tips for plants, flowers and garden ideas to get our gardens looking guest-ready:

1. Instant flowers for colour pop: An easy and almost instant way to adorn your garden is to exploit what is available at this time of year as 'annuals', guaranteed to bring a splash of colour thanks to their often-large blooms and floriferous nature. These plants can grow quickly which means they need plenty of quality compost or garden soil - as well as generous watering. Sunshine lovers include the fabulously scented nicotiana's, vibrant colour schemes of south American Dahlias and the dreamy daisy-like flowers of the willowy Cosmos. If you have a little more shade then a white pelargoniums, begonias, the wonderfully trailing becopa and old fashioned stocks are a few to consider. The almost instant effect allows you to play with colour schemes to suit your style from the cool blues, pinks and whites to the carnival like purples, red and oranges are all possible.

2. Style with pots and planters: Where space is limited, or your soil is less than favourable, a great way of incorporating more beauty is to utilise containers for plants. From terracotta urns to timber planters, ceramic pots and wicker baskets - if it holds compost and has drainage holes, then you can plant in it! Style the same way as you would your indoor décor so select a range of sizes, colours and styles to give a sophisticated and curated appearance. Congregate pots and containers together for a flowing and boisterous affect or use them as structural punctuation around edges of terraces, balconies and pathways.

3. Add a touch of fragrance: Often overlooked but hugely rewarding, fragrant planting is essential when creating atmosphere and character. There are many plants to choose from, but great candidates include, sweet peas, roses, jasmine, and of course, foliage scented herbs - all perfect in bright, sunny conditions of terraces and balconies. One of the most important aspects is to not over-combine the fragrances so if you plant an area with roses allow them to finish flowering before relying on later summer fragrance of something like trachelospermum or jasmine as too many plants with diverse fragrances can actually be overpowering.

4. Create comfort zones: No matter how much we expect the British summer to deliver fine weather, there is no doubt that summer evenings can have some chill so home comforts are great for welcoming friends and family. Comfortable seats, cushions and throws – many of which are now woven from recycled materials and look

beautiful – and are great to place generously around. Firepits not only bring life and character to your garden but some warmth too. By day, create a reading den and snuggle in - Readly is a great source of inspiration, entertainment and relaxation and because you can also read offline it's perfect to lounge in the garden uninterrupted too.

5. Lighting with ambience: In recent years there has been a huge advance in the quality and variety of solar charging and solar powered lights for gardens. So, it is easier than ever to create ambience and extend your evenings in the garden. Look out for vintage style light bulbs with LED inserts in the form of Festoons to hang under trees and along walls and pergolas. Strings of fairy lights can be wound around trees and other upright features and there are also nets that can drape over hedges and topiary. There are also really effective mock church candles which can be put on the tables or hanging lanterns.

[Readly](#) digital subscription service has a magazine with gardening tips to suit every type of gardener, from the first-timer planting pots on a balcony, to the seasoned horticulturist. Top gardening searches across the 5,000 titles on its platform include:

- Hedge trimmer
- Flower box
- Garden shades
- Weed removal
- Wild garlic
- Pond ideas
- Small garden
- Peppermint
- Lavender
- Potato growing

“Reading in the gardening category has reached new heights this year as people look for inspiration for their outdoor spaces and take up or revisit gardening as a hobby. The magazines on our platform have been a great source of education, advice and inspiration for various gardening projects and continue to prove popular as many people open their gardens to welcome guests and show off the fruits of their labour over the last year”, says Ranj Begley, Chief Content Officer at Readly.

Readly digital subscription app provides inspiration for your garden, with unlimited reading to over 5,000 magazines and newspapers including top gardening titles such as BBC Gardeners' World, Modern Gardens and The English Garden. During 2020 over 140,000 issues of magazines were distributed and read 99 million times on Readly digital magazine app.

Readly is offering 2 months of unlimited reading from 17-31 May 2021, then £7.99 a month thereafter. Visit www.readly.com/gardening for more information.

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million times.