

CREATE A TOWN GARDEN AND PATIO

SKILL LEVEL ● ● ● ● ●

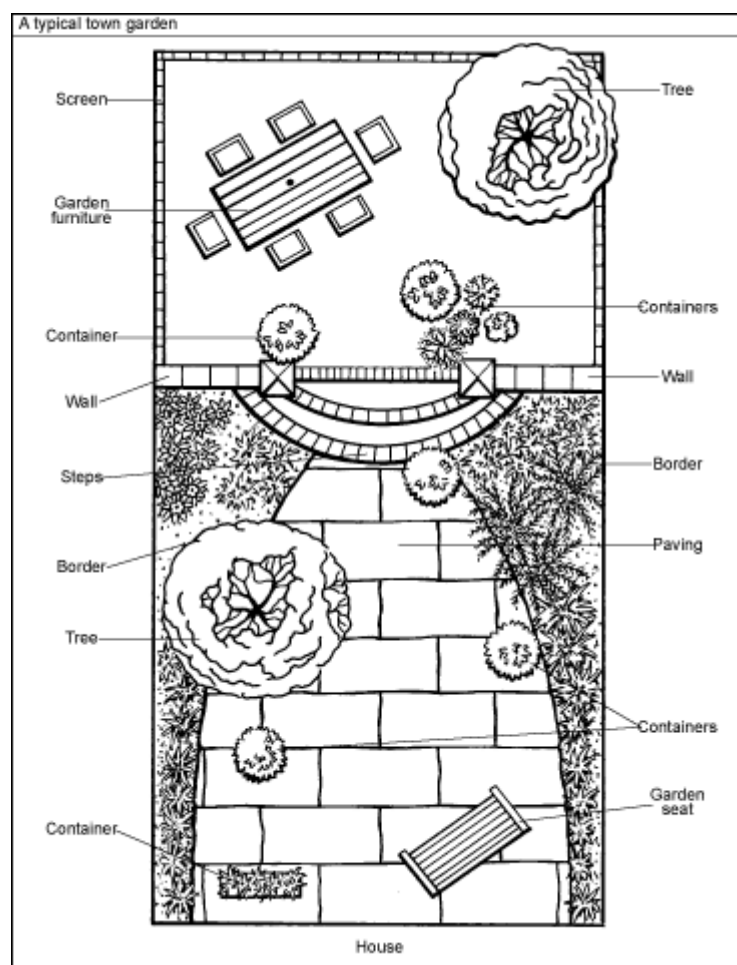
INTRODUCTION

With careful planting and design, you can transform even the tiniest of town plots into a delightful garden.

In gardening, small really is beautiful! Limited space means that you can garden as intensively as you like without devoting hours of your leisure time to such chores as weeding.

Even if you plan to garden on a tight budget, the small dimensions will allow you to develop the most attractive planting schemes without breaking the bank. Every plant you select can be of the very best - because you will need so few - and if you take care with your design, you will be amazed at what superb results you can achieve.

Even if the plot runs to no more than a few square metres it will still have potential for a charming and stylish garden.



2 - Planning the work

Even though the dimensions are small, incorporate an open, preferably paved, area where seating or dining furniture is installed. Avoid overcrowding this area with too much garden furniture, but be ready to furnish it with plenty of attractive plants in containers.

Create an illusion of space

Blind arches, screens which suggest more behind - even when there isn't - a vista with an object at its end and criss-crossing paths.

Make your garden look larger

By adjusting perspective you can make your lawn or paved area wider at the front than at the back. This will have the effect of pushing the horizon further away. Accentuate this distortion by placing tall plants or objects on either side, running down to shorter ones at the centre.

Include a secret garden

If there's room, make your garden harbour exciting secrets: a little arbour, concealed behind a screen; a tiny half concealed pool; an old statue lost among the foliage.

Think of the scale

Your design can be as grand as you like, but remember to scale everything down to the size of your garden. Large trees or huge containers may not be practicable, but one or two prominent features, making a bold statement, are likely to be more effective than masses of small, fussy ones.

Ring the changes

In a tiny garden, it is easy and inexpensive to make major changes. Use this facility as often as you like, mixing and matching plants as well as altering the main elements of your design.

Balance your plants

Planting can be as dense as you like - crowded, even - but take care to banish thuggish varieties that smother their neighbours. Think of scale, when planting, and avoid outlandish sized plants unless you wish to make an especially bold statement.

A large mirror, carefully placed, will give the impression of a larger garden. To make this trick work, have the mirror partially concealed, or at least fixed so that its edges are not obvious.

3 - Planting principles

Plants that fail to provide good foliage, flower, fruit or outline must be rejected. Select only the best varieties and be ruthless in discarding anything that fails to perform.

Try to give an impression of lushness and verdure. Select some plants purely for their foliage, even if they seem too large for the site. The evergreen Aucuba can help, especially if your garden is partly shaded. Its big leaves would make a fine contrast with the tiny leaflets of honeysuckle (*Lonicera nitida* 'Baggesen's Gold'). For spring, consider Spiraea 'Goldflame' for its unique orange foliage, and contrast it with the blue-green grass, blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*).

Remember that the aim is for year-round interest. Ensure that you select something for every season and include bulbs, alpines, plants to squeeze between paving slabs, speedy annuals and biennials.

You don't have to own a tiny garden to take advantage of these ideas. Even if you own a larger outdoor area, you can still apply these principles to your patio, to a small terrace, or perhaps an outdoor seating area.

4 - Planting the bones

Your design may well include such structures as steps, walls, trellis, banks and terraced levels. You can also create a sense of structure using plants, either formally as clipped hedges, or informally, purely for their outline.

Box

(*Buxus sempervirens*) Makes one of the best 'shaping' materials for a small garden because it is easy to keep to size. You can use it as hedging material, as single plants clipped into particular shapes, or even allow it to grow as a small, free-standing tree. A single annual trim, in midsummer, will keep it to the desired dimensions. Alternative evergreens include yew (*Taxus*), holly (*Ilex*), privet (*Ligustrum*) and hedging honeysuckle (*Lonicera nitida*).

Topiary

If you want to clip evergreens into specific shapes, use a frame or a mould made of wire netting and encourage the plants to grow through the shape you have made. Each year, trim the plants back to the desired shape.

Shrubs

When creating informal outline or structure, remember that certain shrubs will provide a distinctive winter and summer outline. The corkscrew hazel (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') is

a fine example. Standard weeping dwarf willows, such as weeping pussy willow (*Salix caprea* 'Kilmarnock') are also useful for outline, as are standard roses or tall upright conifers.

5 - Using structures to enhance the garden's outline

Screens, arches or walls, made of trellis, timber, brick or stone will all help to develop a solid outline, but be sure to furnish such structures with plenty of plant material. Use clematis, honeysuckle (*Lonicera*), climbing and rambling roses to flesh out the bones of your structures.

Strategically placed containers, statues or even gazebos will also help to develop a style. These can be as formal as you like, or could be as simple as a strawberry planter, furnished with edible strawberry plants, or with the pink-flowered ornamental strawberry, 'Pink Panda'.

A garden should look great from the window. Try to arrange a sweeping view, or an enticing vista so that your eye is delighted every time you look out. This is especially important outside windows that are in frequent use, for example, kitchens.

6 - Filling in

Once your structure planting is in place, you can begin to fill up the spaces in between. Infill planting allows maximum scope for interesting colour schemes, for changes in mood and for interesting contrasts in texture of foliage.

Compose for colour. In a small area, colour discipline will help you to achieve the desired effect. Complicated mixtures of colour seldom work, but if you plant with care, you can effect a gradual colour change as you move around the plot.

Here are some colour ideas:

- **Gold, yellow, white**
Mock orange (*Philadelphus coronarius* 'Aureus') with Spiraea 'Goldflame' and Aucuba 'Sulphurea'.
Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* 'Baggesen's Gold') with pieris and white or yellow roses. Underplanting could include ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum*), day lily (*Hemerocallis*) and golden or variegated plantain lily (*Hosta*). Include *Euryops pectinatus* for a splash of summer gold.
- **Cool hues**
Mexican orange blossom (*Choisya ternata* - not 'Sundance'), for foliage and white flowers, planted with African lillies (*Agapanthus*). Bellflowers (*Campanula*) planted among shrubby hebe, myrtles

(Myrtus) or lavenders (Lavandula). Plantain lily (blue-leaved hosta), hardy sage (Salvia) and fleabane (Erigerons) in soft colours.

- **Warmer pinks**
Rhododendrons - practically all of them. 'Flower Carpet' roses with ice plant (Sedum spectabile) for later colour. Anisodonteia with shrubby bindweed (Convolvulus cneorum).

Colour discipline is less crucial in winter and early spring when almost anything that flowers will be welcome. Always include plenty of bulbs, but avoid over-sized daffodils (Narcissus), since they may look out of scale and will certainly look untidy after flowering. Smaller daffodils will do a better job in a tiny garden.

7 - Planning for impact

Once the main planting is complete, you may want to consider adding a few special highlights to your garden. The purpose of such plants is to provide something extra - something that will lift your spirits at certain times of the year. Usually these will be flowers, but there are other aspects, such as fruits or seed capsules. Site your highlight plants where they will carry maximum impact.

Here are some suggestions:

- **Startling bloomers**
Rhododendrons and azaleas are obvious choices, covered as they are with gorgeous blooms in spring. However, camellias offer better value, since their off season foliage is so glossy and beautiful. Look for the gorgeous but very hardy semi-double pink variety Camellia 'Donation'.
- **Fragrance**
Perfume can carry as big an impact as colour. Mock orange (Philadelphus) is bewitching, especially in a small space.

Choose roses for scent too: 'Flower Carpet White' has gentle fragrance, for example, but 'Fragrant Cloud' and the climber 'Zephirine Drouhin' are richly scented. Lavender (Lavandula) is both fragrant and aromatic, and makes a fine edging for a whole assortment of herbs including sage, rosemary, thyme, chives and mint - all of which smell wonderful.

- **Leafy**
Extra foliage, in summer, comes from the larger plantain lily (Hosta), lady's mantle (Alchemilla mollis) and the felty-leaved lamb's ears (Stachys 'Silver Carpet'). Ice plant (Sedum spectabile) has fresh green, succulent foliage from April onwards, until the flowers appear in late summer. Brightest foliage of all is to be found on the Japanese willow

variety 'Hakuro Nishiki'. The leaves are a mix of pink, pure white and green, but scorch very badly if exposed to sunlight.

- **Architectural**

Short-term architecture can be fun! Try placing an outsized plant - a mullein (*Verbascum*), perhaps, or rhubarb, like *Rheum palmatum* - in the foreground of your planting. It will be so out of scale as to look out of place, but the dramatic impact is considerable.

Grow mint in a container, to prevent it from becoming too invasive. Cut it back regularly, to keep it young and tender.

8 - Groundwork

To make a full and valuable contribution in a tiny garden, every plant needs to be in the peak of health.

Make sure border soil is weed-free, fertile and carries a high level of organic matter. Install a compost bin, if you have space, and compost all rottable garden refuse, including prunings, dead flowers etc, as well as vegetable kitchen waste. Spread compost back on the garden as soon as it has rotted down.

Containers

Most small gardens have lots of containers planted up, as well as borders. In some cases, there may not even be soil, and the entire planting will therefore be containerised.

Ensuring year-round interest

Include at least three plants from each section to ensure year-round interest in your garden.

- **Winter**

Weeping pussy willow (*Salix caprea* 'Kilmarnock').
Gaultheria mucronata (syn. *Pernettya*). Lenten rose (*Helleborus orientalis*). Snowdrops (*Galanthus*).
Hebe. Hazel (*Corylus contorta*).

- **Spring**

Camellia Williamsii. Mock orange (*Philadelphus*).
Pieris 'Forest Flame'. Azalea. *Rhododendron yakushimanum*. Rock cress (*Arabis*) and *Aubrieta*.
Spurge (*Euphorbia*). Tulips (*Tulipa*). White daffodils (*Narcissus*).

- **Summer**

Roses (*Rosa*). *Euryopspectinatus*. St John's wort (*Hypericum*). Fuchsias. Shrubby bindweed (*Convolvulus cneorum*). Lavender (*Lavandula*).
Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*). African lily (*Agapanthus*). Day lily (*Hemerocallis*). Plantain lily (*Hosta*).

- **Autumn**

Firethorn (*Pyracantha*). *Anisodonteia*. Autumn

crocus (Colchicum). Japanese Azalea - deciduous.
Maples (Acer). Hardy Fuchsias. Euonymus 'Red
Cascade'.

- **Great all year**

Mexican orange blossom (Choisya). Pieris.
Wormwood (Artemisia 'Powis Castle'). Box (Buxus
sempervirens). Myrtle (Myrtus). Stranvaesia
'Palette'. Conifers. Grasses and sedges.

9 - Plant lists

ALPINES PLANTS

Alpines

AVAILABILITY

March - May

AZALEAS PLANTS

Japanese Azalea

AVAILABILITY

February - May

CAMELLIAS PLANTS

Camellias

AVAILABILITY

February - April

CLIMBERS PLANTS

Clematis

AVAILABILITY

February-
September

Jasmine, summer

May - August

Jasmine, winter

November - April

Passion flower (Passiflora)

May - August

Perennial nightshade (Solanum)

May - August

Sollya heterophylla

June - July

CONIFERS PLANTS

Arbor-vitae (Thuja Aurea Nana)

AVAILABILITY

March - June

Arbor-vitae (Thuja Danica)

March - June

Arbor-vitae (Thuja Rheingold)

March - June

Arbor-vitae (Thuja Sunkist)

March - June

False Cypress (Cham Boulevard)

March - June

False Cypress (Cham Broomhills Gold)

March - June

False Cypress (Cham Ellwoods Gold)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Ellwoods Pillar)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Golden Pot)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Goldsport)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Minima Glauca)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Silver Threads)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Snow White)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Springtime)	March - June
False Cypress (Cham Summer Snow)	March - June
Spruce (Picea alb Conica)	March - June

GRASSES PLANTS

AVAILABILITY

Assorted (including Pampas)	July - August
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HERBACEOUS PLANTS

AVAILABILITY

Day lily (Hemerocallis)	May - June
Plantain lily (Hosta)	May - June
Bellflower (Campanula)	April - June
Stonecrop (Sedum)	July - September
Mullein (Verbascum)	May - June
Christmas rose (Helleborus)	February - March
Lady's mantle (Alchemilla)	April - June

HERBS PLANTS

AVAILABILITY

Bronze fennel	May
Chives	March - May
Marjoram	March - May
Mint	March - May
Parsley	March - May
Rosemary	March - May
Sage	March - May
Tarragon	March - May
Thyme	March - May

RHODODENDRONS PLANTS

AVAILABILITY

Dwarf	March - May
Yakushmanum	April - May

ROSES PLANTS

	AVAILABILITY
Climbing rose	March - August
Climbing patio rose	March - August
Mini standard rose	April - May
Patio rose	May - August
Patio standard rose	April - July
Miniature rose	April - May

SHRUBS PLANTS

	AVAILABILITY
Aucuba varieties	October - April
Bottle brush (Callistemon)	June - July
Box (Buxus sempervirens)	March - June
Cabbage palm (Cordyline)	April - May
Californian lilac (Ceanothus)	March - May
Euryops pectinatus	June - July
Firethorn (Pyracantha)	October - May
Gaultheria mucronata (syn. Pernettya)	October - November
Hardy Fuchsia	June - August
Hazel (Corylus contorta)	December - February
Hebe	All year round (depending on variety)
Holly (Ilex)	February - April
Honeysuckle (Lonicera nit Bagessen's Gold)	May - June
Lavender (Lavandula)	February - September
Magnolia	February - April
Mexican orange blossom (Choisya)	April - June
Mock orange (Philadelphus)	April - June
Myrtle (Myrtus)	May - June
Pieris	March - May
Phormium	May - June
Privet (Ligustrum)	May - June
Shrubby bindweed (Convolvulus Cneorum)	April - May
Skimmia	October - December
Spindleberry (Euonymus)	February - July
St John's wort (Hypericum)	March - July
Weeping pussy willow (Salix Caprea 'Kilmarnock') Willow (Salix Hakuro	May - June

Nishiki 1/4 std)

Wormwood (Artemesia Powis Castle) May - June