

PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

must-have
plants for
every garden

from Charlotte Harris

9 OF THE BEST
WELLIES

HOW TO CREATE
multi-stem
trees

**SMALL SPACE
BIG IDEAS**

A city retreat by
Tom Stuart-Smith

2022
*DESIGN
TRENDS*

GARDEN TRENDS

2022

The past two years have seen gardens – our own private spaces and those open to the public – taking on a greater significance. As well as being places to escape the home office, or venues for relaxed and airy social gatherings, the role they're increasingly being asked to play is as key allies in the fight to boost biodiversity. Here, ten top designers and gardeners reveal the shifts they have seen in gardening recently and how they will be approaching projects and growing in the coming year

Focus on trees

Designer Freddie Strickland

Following the inconclusive outcome at COP26, we, as individuals, must take the lead on replenishing our gardens, streets, parks and land with trees. The loss of our green canopy is highlighted in the damning figures: just 13 per cent of the UK's total land area has tree cover, compared to an EU average of 38 per cent. Those numbers hurt.

A tree is not only a natural solution, carbon store, air purifier and habitat, but through considered design it can also bring balance, privacy and bucketloads of interest to a garden. Trendy is an understatement.

With embarrassing government targets falling well short of what's required, what can we do as individuals? Our often small and valuable outdoor spaces need to be aligned to a common cause, while importantly continuing to serve all the needs of all those who inhabit them. Clearly, we cannot recreate the New Forest in our homes, but together we need wholeheartedly to embrace the increase of our national canopy and, in turn, welcome nature's abundance.

Colour chaos

Garden writer Alice Vincent

If I had to put my money on anything, it would be the return of maximalism, colour and chaos to our gardens, and to the cut flowers and plants we bring into our homes. After a tidal wave of 'Café au Lait' dahlias and shimmeringly tasteful 'La Belle Époque' tulips, a desire for greater fun and frivolity – as well as a desire to garden more ecologically – in our post-lockdown lives can be seen in a bit of floral maximalism. Bright and clashing tones in extravagant arrangements have been perking up table and mantel-scapes on Instagram, and the resurgence in Constance Spry style – as

seen during the recent Garden Museum exhibition on Spry – will triumph over the sparse *Ikebana*-inspired floristry we've seen over the past decade. I, for one, can't wait; bring on the froof.

Sustainable choices

Designer Charlotte Rowe

We still get numerous requests from clients for plastic lawns and water features – the first of which, we don't do, and the second, we try to discourage. However, there does now seem to be a better understanding of the need for natural planting and a greater respect for the context in which a garden or landscape is placed (*genus loci* and the old adage 'right plant, right place' come to mind here).

Much has been said recently about the crucial importance of sustainability in our gardens, but it can be tricky for the average homeowner to know how to achieve this without some technical understanding. This is where professional landscape architects and designers need to advise. I often post 'in-progress' images on Instagram, which show how the natural landscape needs to be handled with respect when making a garden. I emphasise the need to allow gardens to drain properly, minimising harmful run-off using land drainage, and to increase the use of permeable materials for hard landscaping, such as gravel. This, in turn, invites interesting groundcover planting in that gravel and a generally more natural, ecologically sustainable garden.

Designed for joy

Designer Stefano Marinaz

Naturalistic planting and wildlife-inclusive gardens will continue to be popular over the coming year and we're seeing more of our clients favour this approach over formal garden styles, not only in the UK but across Europe too. ▷



FREDDIE STRICKLAND
RHS Young Designer of the Year in 2021. Freddie is based in Bristol and is passionate about creating sustainable gardens.



ALICE VINCENT
An author and garden writer, Alice's expertise is in urban gardens and she shares her insights with her impressive Instagram following.



CHARLOTTE ROWE
Charlotte Rowe's studio in London takes on projects in the UK and beyond. The team's contemporary style stems from designs with 'strong bones.'

A desire for greater fun and frivolity in our post-lockdown lives can be seen in a bit of floral maximalism – bright and clashing tones in extravagant arrangements

ALICE VINCENT

Clients are becoming more receptive to understanding the idea of plant communities that thrive together rather than selecting plants simply by their flowering period or colour

STEFANO MARINAZ



STEFANO MARINAZ

With degrees in agronomy and landscape architecture, Stefano worked for Arne Maynard before setting up his own studio.



ALEXANDRA NOBLE

Alexandra creates high-end, residential gardens rich in colour and texture, but sensitive to their surrounding environment.



ACRES WILD

Debbie Roberts and Ian Smith design their gardens to have a harmonious sense of place. They specialise in naturalistic planting to create a timeless feel.

▷ We encourage choices of plants that, when combined, provide interest all year round. Clients are becoming more receptive to understanding the idea of plant communities that thrive together rather than selecting plants simply by their flowering period or colour.

They also want to learn how to take care of the garden. They really want to be part of it and are looking for tasks to do. This is a big change, which can be attributed to the revival of our natural instinct to make nature a part of our homes. Gardens that are designed with nature in mind create plant communities that are healthier, more natural and have longevity.

Beneficial to biodiversity and more joyful than a manicured garden, the naturalistic approach is also an opportunity to engage children in nature in the close and safe environment of home. It's an educational tool that reinforces the importance of nature and the environment in future generations.

Natural style

Designer Alexandra Noble

Over the past couple of years, the population has found solace in the face of uncertainty within gardens, parks and the wider landscape. Our green spaces have never felt more vital for our wellbeing.

On a domestic scale, I've noticed an increase in clients desiring an informal, natural feel within their urban plots. This wilder aesthetic might be celebrated, for example, via environmentally beneficial practices, such as leaving seedheads over winter, mowing less frequently, allowing plants to grow in gaps between paving, and welcoming mosses and lichens.

As a practical example of promoting sustainability, I'm strongly advocating the environmental benefits of a natural lawn for those clients who request artificial grass, and declining commissions should the client be adamant that artificial grass is the only way forward. I'm also reinforcing

the message to clients and friends outside the industry about the importance of peat-free and organic growing methods.

Timeless elements

Designers Acres Wild

As we work mainly in larger country gardens, we're not seeing the dreadful trend of covering lawns with plastic grass. In fact, clients are asking for more soft landscaping, especially pollinating plants, as a way of reconnecting with nature. They also seem to want less 'stuff', such as outdoor kitchens – although barbecues and fire pits are still popular.

Bi-fold doors and porcelain tiles have hopefully now had their day, and clients are returning to French doors and natural stone, which they perceive as being timeless. Generally, we would say that, guided by us, our clients are buying into the concept of less is more.

Broader views

Grower Claire Ratinon

As someone who sits outside of the horticultural establishment, I'm excited to finally see an appetite for hearing from those whose ideas, values and stories sit beyond the traditional gardening landscape.

There appears to be a growing hunger to discover the histories of the plants we grow and the stories of those who grow them. I'm looking forward to witnessing how embracing the narratives that shape which flowers, shrubs and crops grow in our gardens will influence the ways that we talk about, and practice, gardening.

Under the shadow of the climate crisis, I'm hoping to see more gardeners growing with the natural world central to their practice – for example, leaving their edible plants to flower for the pollinators, planting drought-resilient perennials and abandoning manicured lawns, tidy-edged beds and the annual programme of digging and winter tidying, so that the many

creatures that dwell alongside us in our growing spaces may thrive.

Biodiversity drive

Plantsman Charlie Harpur

This year will be wilder than the last, and life on Earth will thank us for it. Whether we like to be reminded of it or not, biodiversity is declining faster than it has at any other time in human history. But gardeners and designers are becoming more and more aware of our role in the crisis. Monty Don, for example, tackled one of the most accessible practical considerations in early 2021 when his comments on mowing lawns (or not, as the case may be) ruffled a few feathers among sward lovers, but he raised some excellent points.

The findings of the University of Sheffield's Biodiversity in Urban Gardens (BUGS) project – started in 2002 – are more relevant than ever, especially for our predominantly urban population. Among plenty of other things, the project highlighted the fact that there was that there was a whopping 13 square miles of private domestic gardens in Sheffield. As it was selected as a model city for the UK, we can assume that a similarly large proportion of other cities are made up of such high-input lost opportunities.

What BUGS also told us was that a wider range of plants generally equals greater biodiversity, which is a creed I can see being adopted in even the smallest gardens, roof terraces or windowsills. You can see just such a wide range of plants at The Serge Hill Project for Gardening and Health started by Tom and Sue Stuart-Smith, in Hertfordshire, which we hope will be open to visitors this year.

Wonderfully wild

Designer Jonathan Snow

I've noticed a move towards gardens and landscapes that are more 'undone' than ever

before. Words such as 'nature', 'wildlife', and 'biodiversity' have long cropped up in briefs, but clients have only recently started to really embrace this trend.

I'm currently working on a design for a lake, and the plan is to allow the grass surrounding it to grow back by relying more on the seedbank within the soil, rather than intervention by way of a specialist seed mix. On the same project, a number of large fields are going to be rewilded with the lightest of touches, allowing natural processes to re-establish themselves more slowly.

Another client surprised me recently (and pleasantly) by asking for a really full and unruly garden in London. She wants to be completely immersed in planting, and the challenge is to give her that feeling in an urban setting, and for it to look good for the majority of the year. I also forecast an increasing appreciation for, and a willingness to pay for, good maintenance.

Wildlife support

Designer Juliet Sargeant

The most striking trend that I'm seeing – and am delighted to see – is an increasing interest in creating some space and support for wildlife in the garden.

It cuts across all the styles of garden that my clients want: formal, country, urban and naturalistic. Most people are keen to plant with a view to feeding birds and insects, while some go as far as to think about creating habitats. People with a large enough space are often happy to give some over to meadow, and some are willing to let wildflowers or 'weeds' grow in the lawn. I would say, however, that for most British gardeners, a pristine, stripy lawn is still king.

One of our most popular day courses has become 'How to Create your Own Wildlife Pond' and I'm looking forward to increasing numbers coming to our various 'eco' and sustainable gardening days.

A wider range of plants generally equals greater biodiversity, which is a creed I can see being adopted in even the smallest gardens

CHARLIE HARPUR



CLAIRE RATINON

Author and organic food grower, Claire is passionate about how plants and nature have the potential to heal and connect us.



CHARLIE HARPUR

Plantsman and designer for Tom Stuart-Smith Studio, Charlie is setting up The Serge Hill Project for Gardening and Health.



JONATHAN SNOW

A gold medal winner at RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2021, Jonathan enjoys introducing contrasts to his designs to create depth and richness in the garden.



JULIET SARGEANT

Juliet is a keen advocate for health and wellbeing through gardening. She's a garden designer, presenter, and lead tutor at Sussex Garden School.