



Modern gardens *to inspire you*

A successful outdoor space should be both beautiful and practical. Take your lead from this selection of stylish schemes

Compiled by Melanie Whitehouse

With so many homeowners now using their gardens as extensions of their homes, an outdoor space that is functional, usable and low maintenance is an important part of modern living. Whether you live in a mansion or a small semi, it makes sense to create a space that suits your lifestyle, giving you space for relaxing, entertaining and dining outdoors.

Matthew Wilson is managing director at Clifton Nurseries, London's oldest garden centre. In his book, *Making A Garden* (£12.99, Quadrille), he says that the key to achieving a garden that works for you is finding a happy balance between beauty and usability. 'Spend time thinking through what you want from your garden: what elements simply have to be in it, how you intend to use it and how much time and money you want to spend on it,' he advises. 'You should also allow yourself to dream, taking inspiration from nature, other gardens or even seemingly unrelated elements such as architecture, music or art.'

No matter how large or small your outside space, the following selection of garden designs in a range of different styles will give you plenty of ideas and inspiration to help you develop your own plot.



Sculptural

Created by garden designer and TV presenter Andy Sturgeon and built by Linden Landscapes, this scheme had to complement a large, contemporary new-build in Cranbrook, Kent.

The rendered, curved walls of the garden were inspired by the central tower of the house, as were the mixed glacial boulders. Hardwood decking was laid all round the house and the turfed area was

bounded by prairie-style planting to give year-round, low-maintenance interest.

'The end result is a garden that has allowed the house to blend in more sympathetically with its surroundings as it has matured,' says Linden Landscapes' managing director Mick Callahan.

Linden Landscapes (01892 599 725; lindenlandscapes.co.uk) →



Tropical

This sloping, 50m garden in Surrey was originally laid to lawn with old-fashioned borders and crumbling stone walls running down to a boggy stream. Debbie Roberts of Acres Wild had the task of creating two distinct areas. The owners wanted the garden to be practical but fun, quirky and tropical to provide a relaxing escape after work.

I designed a modern garden built on a series of levels with paved, decked and lawned terraces contained within large swathes of lush foliage

planting,' explains Debbie. She used cedar decking to create a large dining terrace close to the house with a paved sun terrace and entertaining space below. Wooden steps link the house and terraces to a lawn further down the slope. Beyond the lawn, a timber boardwalk leads to a deck close to the stream, and the whole area is planted with bog plants that will withstand occasional flooding.

Acres Wild (01403 891 084; acreswild.co.uk)



Courtyard

Split over three levels, this small, walled garden in Winchester uses terraces to add interest and create a feeling of space. 'My clients had created a garden room at a lower level, so we dug down to build a garden that ran out at the same level, then cut into the slope to produce three terraces, reflecting the internal layout of the house,' says Sarah Wheeldon of Sauterelle Garden & Landscape Design.

Two outdoor living areas were created, one for dining and one with a small lawn. 'I used Purbeck stone paving in the courtyard and flint risers on the steps, and repointed the original flint wall. The flint and the Purbeck stone are both local materials and work beautifully together,' says Sarah.

The white walls were rendered in low-maintenance Sto with hardwood benches providing a warm contrast. The third level runs from the lawn area up three flint steps to the back door and a small vegetable bed.

The overall effect is contemporary but with lush cottage-style planting. 'Creating a sense of flow has actually made the garden feel larger,' adds Sarah.

Sauterelle Garden & Landscape Design (01962 627 602; sauterelle.co.uk)



Water



This garden, measuring just 10x10m, in Doncaster, South Yorkshire, was originally stocked with unusual but over-mature plants. The clients, who are keen gardeners, wanted a total redesign and were happy to replace grass with water.

'We love the fact these clients were brave enough to give over a quarter of their garden to a wildlife pool,' says Chris Parsons of Hallam Garden Design. 'The access round to the side of the house is via a row of stepping stones across the water, through a bespoke archway and trellis built with southern yellow pine.'

This is a flat garden and the clients requested changes of level, stone retaining walls and a water chute to add some movement to the garden. A water feature provides a pleasant and relaxing sound as well as complementing the ferns and astrantia planted around it. It's very much a plant-lovers' garden, featuring white agapanthus, sage and an olive tree, with blue-flowered *Agastache* in the background.

Hallam Garden Design (0114 230 2540; hallamgardendesign.co.uk) →

3 smart & simple growing ideas

- 1 Think you don't have space to grow any vegetables? Quick-growing, shallow-rooting crops such as lettuces and salad leaves can be grown in lengths of guttering from a DIY shop filled with fine soil.
- 2 Make a frame for climbing plants such as sweet peas and beans. Staple chicken wire to an old wooden window frame, minus the glass, and dig it into the soil next to your plants.
- 3 To make your plants leafier and greener, put a teaspoon of Epsom salts and a teaspoon of sugar into the planting hole, then add soil on top.





Eco

This garden in Cheltenham was influenced by the contemporary architecture of the house, which is owned by adventurous and art-loving clients who place great emphasis on being eco-friendly. Its strong curves echo the shape of the front of the house as well as protecting the root zones of trees.

Designed by Rose Lennard of Chameleon Designs, the garden includes several eco features: rainwater harvesting under the back paved terrace, a rammed earth wall built using material excavated from forming the ponds, and a green roof on the summerhouse.

'The retaining walls are built out of oak, I've used oak fencing and stone of UK provenance, and created a vegetable garden with a greenhouse, fruit cage, compost bins and a shed,' says Rose. 'I also added a log pile for insects and abundant planting with year-round interest for wildlife as well as people. The lighting is low energy with tiny-but-effective 1W LEDs. The owners told me: "We love spending all day here; it's a restful haven but also a place to work in and enjoy eating what we've grown."'

Chameleon Designs (01242 572 369; chameleongardens.co.uk)



7 clever eco ideas

- 1 Create your own wildflower meadow with a roll of pre-planted wildflower turf, from £27.70 for 1.25sqm, from Wiggly Wiggles (01981 500 391; wigglywiggles.co.uk).
- 2 In the autumn, shred fallen leaves with shears and spread on flower beds – a great organic fertiliser for spring.
- 3 Use the twigs and sticks from pruning trees as plant stakes in your garden.
- 4 For top dressing borders or pots, use coloured, recycled glass aggregate that has been tumbled to round off sharp edges.
- 5 Make sure all wood used in the garden – for furniture, fencing, decking – has been sustainably sourced and carries the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) logo.
- 6 Install a living roof on your shed with low-maintenance sedum matting from Enviromat (0333 456 4536; enviromat.co.uk).
- 7 Shop locally to cut down your carbon footprint and boost your community's economy.



City

Garden designer Charlotte Rowe was asked to create a contemporary garden for a young couple who were restyling an early nineteenth-century townhouse in London's Notting Hill. They wanted increased privacy as well as wow factor; a pale, cool colour palette and high-spec finishes with rich, lush planting for year-round appeal.

'The site is long and narrow and the garden was on two different levels with two unattractive staircases pushing into the garden, wasting valuable space,' says Charlotte. 'We substantially lowered the main part of the garden and rationalised the stairs. This improved the view from the lower-ground floor and gave greater privacy.'

The focal point is now a 10m-long water rill with two copper spouts cut into cream limestone paving, bridged by two cedar-decked pontoons. The planting is low key and rhythmic, with a rich green, cream and blue/purple palette. A row of dramatically uplit, pleached hornbeams at the far end of the garden helps to screen the view of the buildings beyond.

Charlotte Rowe (020 7602 0660; charlotterowe.com)



5 contemporary garden plants

- 1 Soft tree fern (*Dicksonia antarctica*)
- 2 Flax lily 'Sundowner' (*Phormium*)
- 3 African lily 'Bressingham White' (*Agapanthus*)
- 4 Black bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*)
- 5 Golden oats (*Stipa gigantea*)

Charlotte Rowe Garden Design/Light IO



Japanese

Tranquil and contemporary, this garden was built as a small, south-facing, enclosed space to complement a new pool house in a large country estate in Buckinghamshire.

'We used square black basalt paving slabs to create a terrace off the pool-house deck, and these fragment out into a curvilinear lawn,' says garden designer Ian Smith of Acres Wild. Two granite bridges cross a gravel stream (below), and granite stepping stones create informal paths. A stone bench and Japanese lanterns provide focal points in the garden, and all the details, such

as trims and steps, are reminiscent of an authentic Japanese garden.

'The planted borders also contribute to the Japanese character and atmosphere, wrapping around the existing trees and containing the lawn, terrace and stream,' adds Ian. 'Nearly all of the plants used in the garden are native to Japan, including bamboos for screening, maples and pines as feature plants, and *Pachysandra* and *Liriope* for evergreen ground cover.'

Acres Wild (01403 891 084; acreswild.co.uk) →





Sloping

The brief for this garden was that it should have structure and symmetry, blocks of colour and an ordered feel,' says Chris Parsons of Hallam Garden Design. Measuring 70x10m and with a slope of 7m down towards the house, the garden is divided into three sections: an ornamental garden (shown); a vegetable garden with greenhouse and compost area; and a woodland.

The lines of the design take the eye to the edges of the garden, making it look wider. Planting

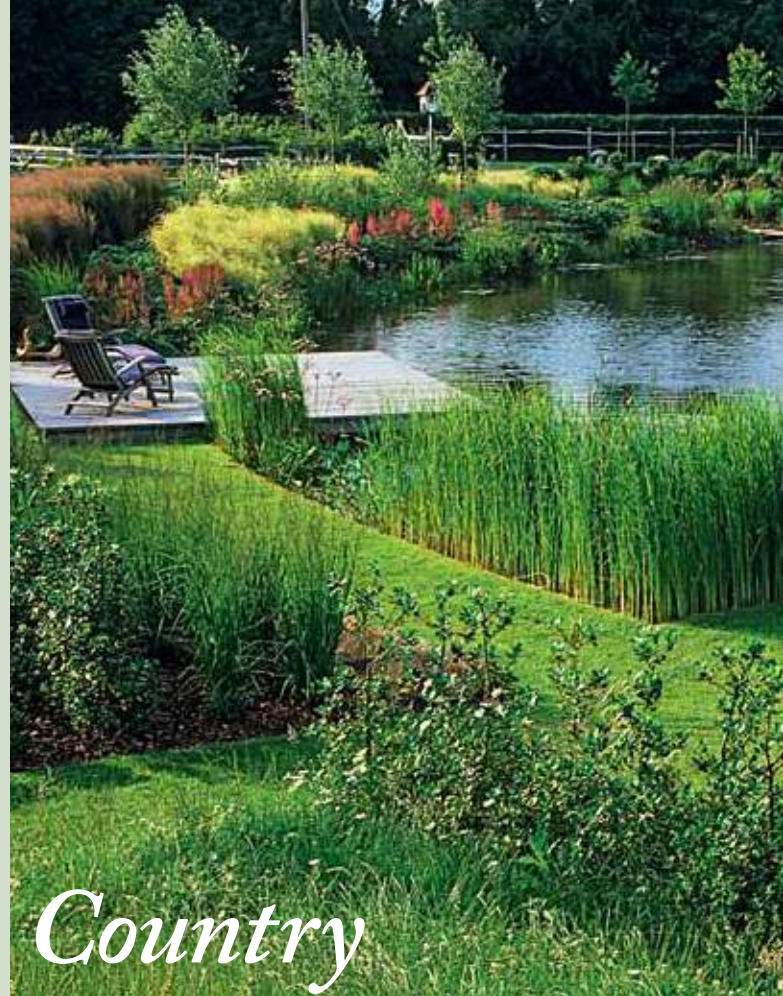
includes the perennial *Agastache*, whose blue flowers make a stunning feature in the summer. A 6m-long pergola separates the ornamental garden from the vegetable plot and is covered with wisteria and clematis throughout spring and summer. 'Our client, a paediatrician, said that this is a garden to relax and unwind in,' says Chris. "I go to work the next day a better doctor," she told us.'

Hallam Garden Design (0114 230 2540; hallamgardendesign.co.uk)

10 low-maintenance plants

Antony Henn of online DIY gardening company **Garden On A Roll (01707 276 620; gardenonaroll.co.uk)** picks his top 10

- 1 *Heuchera* 'Midnight Rose' Beautiful wine-red foliage.
- 2 *Santolina chamaecyparissus* (cotton lavender) Low growing with silvery leaves; trim regularly to keep it tight and 'hedgehoggy'.
- 3 *Hebe* 'Emerald Gem' Tiny lime-green leaves and a moundlike habit.
- 4 *Stipa tenuissima* Light grey/green grass that sways in the wind.
- 5 *Ophiopogon* 'Nigrescens' Black grass – effective planted en masse.
- 6 *Bergenia* 'Overture' Reddish foliage in winter; pink spring flowers.
- 7 *Polystichum setiferum* Evergreen, native, shade-loving fern.
- 8 *Euphorbia characias wulfenii* Drought tolerant; lime-green flowers.
- 9 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Morning Light' Tall, grassy foliage with late-summer flower plumes.
- 10 *Cornus* 'Midwinter Fire' Bright orange stems in autumn/winter.



Country

Inter-connected spaces define this large garden surrounding a barn conversion, uniting the house and outbuildings with the glorious views of rural Hampshire.

'The brief was to provide a contemporary country setting for the barns and enhance the views,' says designer Debbie Roberts of Acres Wild. 'We had to include space for outdoor living and entertaining, paths and a water feature. It had to be bold, simple and robust, highly practical and reasonably easy to maintain.'

The large garden to the west of the house (above) contains a 50m-long curving pond with a viewing deck, and is planted with broad bands of grass, box and holly hedging to shelter the space and frame the South Downs. Debbie also included a scented garden between the kitchen and granary, an arrivals courtyard (right), an orchard, a large games lawn and party terrace, and an avenue garden off the sitting room. Lavenders, *Verbena bonariensis*, creeping thyme and Iceberg roses provide a purple and white colour scheme.

Acres Wild (01403 891 084; acreswild.co.uk) GD

