

ACCESS LONDON



Make your garden shine in winter

Summer is long gone, and the garden is looking tired and sad, so just what can you do to give it a bit of a lift for this winter?

The good news is that there are lots you can do, and in many ways the beauty of reorganising your garden in winter, is that the garden is stripped back to its bare bones, and it's therefore easier to see the true structure of the garden. One of the problems with many people's gardens is that they lack structure, and so when the winter months come many gardens just fade away into a blob of nothingness – there's nothing structurally interesting about the garden, that's going to carry it visually through the winter. Summer is about colour, winter is about structure, shapes, and texture. If you can get this right in the midst of a bleak winter then your garden is going to look even better come the height of summer. So here are my top tips for creating winter...

// A WELL PLACED PIECE OF ATTRACTIVE FURNITURE CAN ADD REAL WINTER INTEREST TO A GARDEN //



In summer the pergola is dominated by the greenery of the climbers and only really comes into its own in the winter.



The dusky blue painted pergola provides structure and interest, but also enhances the grey winter sky and provides a bit of a lift.



Buxus Winter interest is provided by features such as the ornamental metal gate and metalwork table and chairs.

Garden Photos of designers own garden, in Hertfordshire



The summer garden is dominated by colour and flowers, which are long gone in the winter.

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Buxus low hedging and Taxus tall hedging provide a real framework to the winter garden.



About Patricia Fox

Patricia set up Aralia Garden Design, 8 years ago, and the company has an enviable reputation within the UK as an award winning design practice. Aralia won a Silver Floral Award at Chelsea Flower Show 2012 & 2009, and they have also won the prestigious BALI* Landscape Design Excellence Award consecutively for the last 3 years. They were thrilled to win the SGD** Best Small Garden Award 2012 for a tiny Victorian garden just outside of London.

*BALI / British Association Landscape Industries

**SGD / Society of Garden Designers

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TOP WINTER TIPS

1. Evergreen Plants: plants such as Buxus sempervirens (Box), Taxus bacatta (Yew), Mahonia, Euphorbia – all of these stay green throughout the year, make sure you have some of these to provide a framework of greenery.

2. Trees: even in the smallest of gardens the inclusion of a tree can add great drama, and can be squeezed in. If your garden is tiny, then plant it in a pot (of a suitable size) to restrict growth. Betula jacquemontii's are perfect, their silvery white barks provide a double whammy of interest during the winter months.

3. Height: a metal arch or pergola can add height to a small space, and will offer a great opportunity for climbing plants. Evergreen climbers can provide greenery all year round, my personal favourite (for a sunny spot) is Trachelium jasmimoides, tiny star white flowers in the summer with a gorgeous jasmine fragrance. A winter flowering evergreen option would be Clematis 'Wisley Cream', which can be planted at any time, and can cope with full sun or partial shade.

4. Topiary: perfect for small London gardens, a well chosen piece, or series of pieces can create a perfect focal point. Both Buxus (Box) and Taxus bacatta (Yew) are great for topiary and can cope with a wide range of environmental conditions. They also look fantastic when topped with a dusting of snow.

5. White: use white winter flowering plants to brighten up some dark corners, such as Helleborus Niger, Skimmia confusa 'Kew Green' and Erica carnea Springwood White. One of my favourites is Sarcococca confusa, which is a small evergreen shrub with a tiny white flower, but an amazing punchy fragrance – perfect for a small space.

6. Lighting: if your budget can stretch to this, then install some garden lighting, to highlight some key garden features, i.e. to up-light a tree, to graze up a piece of topiary, to highlight a small ornament/sculpture. It's amazing even on a dull day in the winter how dark it can be, lighting can enhance your garden from midday thru to midnight. Choose features that can be easily viewed from the house to get maximum benefit.

7. Furniture/Ornaments: a well placed piece of attractive furniture can add real winter interest to a garden, check out antique stores for wrought iron chairs, benches and tables, these can look fabulous tucked away within a planting bed or in full view on your patio. Take a simple wrought iron chair and add a flower pot or three, or a galvanised steel watering can for an instant focal point.

8. Tidy: sweep away the leaves and debris and have a really good tidy up, it's amazing the difference that doing this can make, and how much better your garden will look.

Now sit back and enjoy your winter garden!