


Gardening for summer



IN ASSOCIATION WITH

 **Husqvarna**

You must be in the mood before buying

Don't let sentiment cloud your ideas for garden design, says *Patricia Fox*

There is a great time to go out to the garden, and take charge of your needs and perhaps extend outside space. Whether your garden is big or tiny, the basic principles of garden design remain largely the same and it would be a good idea to consider them before getting stuck into the planting.

People often state the merits of making out to their local garden centres and nurseries, among themselves with names of beautiful plants, without giving any thought to how the garden itself should be structured first.

Step onto a roller and first take a walk

around your garden with pencil and paper or iPad in hand. If you have a little corner, great. If not, then think things you will need to consider on what looks good, what is worth buying and what that just get hope. I often find that this is the toughest part for my clients. They need to hold on to those few sentimental reasons or just because they have put them a lot of money. But is either a good reason to invest in?

For small gardens you will need to work much harder and be more frugal. Create a good mood by collecting images of plants, textures and gardens that you like — a good Google search will bring a wealth of images.

For more freedom why not visit one or even of the UK's great gardens that open to the public? Visit one or both of the National Garden Scheme. These shows can also provide time of inspiration. The RHS Chelsea Flower Show (May 23 to 27) is perhaps the most well-known. They run it in celebration of RHS's anniversary, and with the Chelsea Flower Show strong in its second year, a great visit to London during the



A mood board will help you to visualize your dream garden

any work could be done and finished! The show was a nice surprise in 2012 that was alongside the main event, with over 100 projects displaying everything from community and genetic gardening to performance and installation.

Once you are fully engaged, it is time to finish your mood board by including anything you want to do in your garden. Be subtle — if you have a dark and shady spot, then a Mediterranean-style garden is probably going to be practical. You could be better off considering a better progress there with shade-loving leafy plants such as ferns, hostas and so on.

If you are lucky enough to have a sunnier, south-facing garden, then a Mediterranean design with olive, Italian plants such as lavender and bay leaf would be considered. However, plant your favorite, colorful and vibrant plants — this is probably the most important element. A small garden can be a showstopper with a light, sunny palette of formal materials and colors. But try to throw in two sunny styles and colors and it will look like the proverbial dog's dinner.

Start with the big stuff. If you have ever planned an interior room, you would probably have started with the wall colors and colors before choosing the larger pieces of furniture to suit it. Ditto for gardens. For small gardens, the perimeter walls or fences will be your external walls. But if you have a large garden, you may choose to establish a perimeter "room", later

during partitions such as hedges and contemporary glass screens. (Contemporary Glass has some clever screens that alternate between clear and opaque at the flick of a switch.)

Create rooms with different functions that provide a different feel. A thoughtful palette with lighting can provide a great entertaining space for different events and drinks. Create windows where someone can sit and reflect, or an open covered area for sun with contemporary screen furniture for an outdoor lounge.

There are online possibilities for how you can design and see images online. You can be creative and imaginative. If all else fails, or if you would prefer to have a design team, then contact the Society of Garden Designers. They have a list of about 200 registered designers throughout the UK, who have been awarded the professional accreditation of MRGD and can offer expert advice.

My best thoughts with gardens, as in life, first impressions are important, so make sure you have at least one key feature that will catch the eye and a touch of drama, elegance, mystery — whatever word it is that you wish to create. Then with the remaining bits of paper, a system that is a generous gesture or simply an elegant, contemporary flourish which draws both the eye and the body with its textures and forms.

Then, and only then, can you go out there and begin.