

Hertfordshire Life

March 2016 | hertfordshirelife.co.uk

THE RICH LIST 2016

Herts' 50 wealthiest & how they got to the top

BERKHAMSTED
battle for civil rights

Big drama in **WELWYN**

£1.5bn **WATFORD** plan

LETCHWORTH pop
artist coming home



Mum & me plc
How mum-daughter
businesses make it work

**Museum
treasures**
*What would our curators
save first in a fire?*

Get writing
How the county's
writing groups can
help you plus Herts'
strange literary links

Spring time

» Family Easter ideas » 2016 garden trends plus BBC expert's tips
» Beautiful bluebell walks » 120 things to do in our March county diary

£3.20



2016 GARDEN TRENDS

Philippa Pearson asks top Herts garden designers Patricia Fox and Andrew Wenham for their tips for this year's garden



Be creative with containers to add easily interchangeable displays.



Plush and veg congregate in surprisingly small spaces.

WITH spring in the air and its longer and warmer days, March is a good time to get your garden tidied up and ready for the new season. For new leavers later in the year, this is also the time to plan some rewarding changes.

Gardens are about people, so think of your garden as a space that grows with your needs and requirements, whether these are family orientated, centred on entertaining, for relaxation or simply as a place of horticultural beauty. Like the fashion industry, gardening also has fresh trends each year to tempt you. The RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May is an excellent source of inspiration, hosting the latest ideas in gardening design, gardening accessories and plants suited to a wide range of outdoor and indoor growing space. You don't have to be a fashion slave and completely change everything in your garden each year, but be brave and do

'The art in a small garden is introducing one or two significant pieces that bring drama and impact'

embrace some change. Even on a small scale, it can bring big rewards.

The world of garden experiences is constantly evolving and Patricia Fox, founder of Azalia Garden Design in Sawbridgeworth, says the trend for making the most of our outdoor space continues. 'People are to use their gardens for entertaining for both family and friends, and anything that can make the garden more accommodating and weatherproof is a major help,' she says. 'Most wanted by our clients are outdoor fireplaces, fire pits, contemporary awnings and pergolas. The other major trend is outdoor kitchens. We all want the outdoor lifestyle in spite of the British weather and eating outdoors just adds another dimension.'

Outdoor materials for terraces and patios that reflect those used in the home are a key way of linking the two spaces, says Weston-based



Grow herbs and vegetables indoors or on windowsills. (Photo: H&A/Hammock)

Like the fashion industry, gardening has fresh trends each year to tempt you



garden designer Andrew Wenham. This can be as simple as the tone and colour of internal and external floor surfaces, so more complex ideas like placing or structures that you can see through and beyond.

A small change such as introducing containers will create new vistas and features while individualising your outdoor space, Wenham adds. 'Large ceramic pots always look great. Choose simple shapes for a strong look – structures draw the eye and bring mystery into a garden.'

In the late 1990s, I met the charismatic green-haired French botanist Patrick Blanc, who was at the forefront of vertical green walls. His ideas were revolutionary, magical and quite different from anything else around in garden design at that time. Some thought that growing plants on a wall was just a fad and not a theme to be taken seriously, but vertical and green walls seem to be here to stay and Patricia Fox champions them. 'We first used a green wall in 2009 at our Chelsea Flower Show garden. Freshly Propped in the form of an edible salad wall and we've been using them ever since,' she says. 'For a small



Vertical green wall and pebbles designed by Araba (Photo: Araba)

space, even a balcony, they are amazing. They provide greenery, texture, drama, fragrance and colour, all in a depth of around 10cm. That's a pretty amazing punch for such a tiny amount of space. They're no harder to look after than a traditional border and come with their own fertigation (irrigation and fertiliser) systems.'

If you have a small garden, Fox and Wenham agree less is more. 'The real art in a small garden,' says Fox, 'is introducing one or two significant pieces that bring drama and impact. We craned a beautiful sculptured wicker seat into a tiny garden measuring only 4m x 5m and surrounded it with dicksonia tree ferns; the space became breathtaking.'

Wenham adds, 'Look at bold shapes, keep things simple, select fewer plants and plant en masse. Choose structural elements that have multi-functions – a retaining wall supporting a



A sculpture makes a strong feature in a garden



Wicker seat surrounded by greenery and ferns, designed by Anika (Photo: Anika)



Raised beds are good for smaller spaces and can link to walkways and seating

change in levels that also acts as seating, and in materials that relate to the house.'

My tips for quick and easy ways to transform your garden include reshaping the lawn and defining the edges with good border shears, and painting fences and furniture with one of the many exterior woodwork paints available. Also try growing fruit and vegetables in containers; microgreens like pea shoots, radish tops and baby basil on windowsills, trained fruit trees in pots on the patio, and cherry tomatoes in hanging baskets. Take time to visit other gardens and horticultural shows as well – they are all great sources of inspiration.

Philippa Pearson's book *Small Space Big Ideas* published by Dorling Kindersley has lots of step-by-step projects for small gardens, balconies and indoor spaces. See philippapearson.co.uk



Steps and containers add interest and depth to the garden by Andrew Warham (Photo: Nick Cornwell)

THE DESIGNERS

Patricia Fox
Anika
Studio 2, New House Farm
Lower Cherting Road
Sawbridgeworth
DG7 9Y 72AAH
anika.org.uk

Andrew Warham Garden
Design
30 Hildon Road
Wotton
Ox12 7JQ
andrew-warham.co.uk