#### THE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO CREATING THE PERFECT GARDEN



Integrating A
Hot Tub Into The
Garden

Delights Of The Fifth Season

Ditch Your Dreaded Timber Decking

## Welcome.

Going into August we're heading into the back end of summer, transitioning soon into the fifth season.

The in-between period between summer and autumn, where we have late or continued bloomers, but the majority begin to fade and transform into their autumn forms.

There's a few more jobs to do in the garden now we're looking at this season change, and I'll explain a little more about the fifth season, which is probably my favourite time and how to get the last squeeze out of your summer perennials.

The kids will be heading back to school soon and another autumn will be upon us, so savour these last few weeks of summer.

Enjoy the read,

OSCAY
Owner at
Marsland-Roberts
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## August 2025

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**Cover Photo:** Ready for hosting Summer gatherings

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August is the month where our summer garden begins to wane, flowers are fading, veg is ready for cropping and the onset of autumn begins to feel too real.

Early flowering perennials will have long since finished flowering, and their old flowering stems will gradually go to seed, possibly starting to look a little tatty. Unless you want to keep the seeds for propagation, or for ornamental value and protection for overwintering bugs, you can rejuvenate them now with a good trim.

Don't know where to cut? Perennials die back to the ground once they have finished

their season. When the stems have browned, cut them right back to over an inch above the ground, ready for a new flush in the spring.

Can your plants re-bloom in the same year? Alchemilla mollis, a plant that is maligned for its propensity to self-seed everywhere, is one of the best plants to chop back for a second flush. However, self-seeding can be prevented if the whole plant is sheared back to the ground as soon as the flowers begin to turn from sulphur-yellow to light brown. Within a couple of weeks, fresh new leaves will reappear with that lovely glaucous, green colouring.





Trim lavender once flowering is over to maintain a compact, bushy shape, but avoid cutting into old wood



Keep camellias and rhododendrons wellwatered through late summer while their flower buds are forming for next year's display



Remove any hardy annuals which have finished flowering if you don't want them to self-seed

## THOUGHTS OF A GARDEN DESIGNER

## **Delights Of The Fifth Season**

This is a little-known fact, but here there are not just four seasons. The 'Fifth Season,' is often the most spectacular and occurs at the end of summer. It's known as the fifth season due to the spectacular changes that occur between the summer and autumn transition. The colours in the garden tend toward gold and bronze as the brighter early and mid-summer flowers fade. It's the time of year to enjoy ornamental grasses for their seed heads, and plants that thrive in dry, hot conditions, such as lavender and rosemary.

Shrubs and trees come into their own when herbaceous plants fade and can maintain interest in the garden through summer into winter.

We may be heading into the colder months (I'm sorry, we said it!) but that is no reason to abandon the garden. With a bit of preparation it is easy to make the most of the beautiful aspects of the new season. Relaxing with friends and family over a hearty barbecue, while wrapped up warmly, and hanging on to enjoy toasting marshmallows over a crackling fire pit seems all the more tempting when the weather begins to cool in the evenings.

#### Create an outdoor room:

Every garden should have a dedicated space for sitting, relaxing and entertaining –

whether a patio or deck, or perhaps an entire cabin area if space allows. Make sure it feels like a proper room by choosing comfortable garden furniture that suits the space and add some textural blankets for cosy vibes.

#### Invest in a lighting scheme:

A well-lit garden looks wonderfully inviting and will really be a mood setter, making you more inclined to spend time in it on darker evenings. Lighting your garden also makes it an attractive feature to look out onto from your house when the weather gets really chilly.

#### Warm things up:

Providing warmth, light and a means to cook, fire pits are indispensable for the garden in the cooler weather going into autumn. There is something quite nostalgic about a fire in the garden. Fire pits come in an array of styles and types, from built in gas pits, log burners and even portable fire bowls for smaller spaces, or where you need more flexibility.

#### Continue the blooms:

Flowers such as Rudbeckia, Michaelmas daisies and Dahlias make a splendid display at this time of year, carrying the jewel toned colours through to the autumn.

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## **How To Control Garden Weeds**

Weeds are the bane of any garden owner. Unfortunately, they are part and parcel of any garden. It's important to note that many common garden weeds have a different shorter life cycle than our usual garden plants causing seedlings to appear at most times of the year, which is why it feels like they're always prevalent. Letting weeds take hold can cause them to outcompete your garden plants causing you to see a decline in their growth.

There are several ways you can manage weeds in your garden without the use of chemicals. Some require more intervention than others but there are various ways to help, depending on your needs and suitability for your garden.

#### **Ground Cover Planting**

Ground cover can be used as a method of suppressing weeds by blocking out sunlight and preventing weed seeds

from germinating. Some popular types of ground cover include perennial flowers, such as Ajuga or Vinca, Japanese spurge and evergreen shrubs, such as juniper or dwarf pine.

These plants are typically low-growing and have a dense growth habit, which makes it difficult for weeds to establish themselves. In addition, ground cover

plants can help to retain moisture in the soil, which can also help to suppress weed growth. Densely planting can also suppress light to the soil preventing weeds.

#### Mulching

Mulch is also an effective ground cover for suppressing weeds. This can be achieved by using a thick layer of organic material, such as wood chips or garden



bark a couple of inches deep making sure not to pile it up around the base of your plants.

These materials can suppress weed growth by blocking light and preventing weed seeds from germinating. Mulch also has other benefits to aid your garden plants, helping retain moisture in the soil, and preventing the soil from drying out. The mulch will need replenishing every couple of years as it will break down, but this is also beneficial, and it feeds the soil

with nutrients again. Give the mulch a top-up as the level drops.

#### **Landscape Fabric**

Landscaping fabric can also be used as a physical barrier to prevent weed growth. However, it's important to note that while this can suppress weeds and reduce the number of weeds, landscape fabric has

an open weave where weed seed can still penetrate a layer of gravel or bark mulch on top may help this further.

#### **Hand Weeding**

Out of Control Weeds

With regular upkeep, weeds can become less of a chore. If you see a weed, remove it when you do, to avoid spread. This is the best, cost-effective method and most suitable for garden borders.

### From the Outdoor Kitchen

Nothing tastes better than fruit and vegetables grown in your own back garden. Tomatoes are satisfying to grow and can be used in so many dishes, so your hard work keeping them happy now pays off.

#### Recipe

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small red onion, finely diced
- 1 clove of garlic, finely sliced
- Pinch of sea salt
- 500g cherry tomatoes halved or large tomatoes chopped
- 110g caster sugar
- 125ml red wine vinegar
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper (to taste)

#### Method

- 1. Add the oil to a medium-sized saucepan.
- Cook the onion and garlic with a pinch of sea salt over medium heat for about 5 minutes until they have
- Add the cherry tomatoes, sugar, vinegar, sea salt and pepper
- 5. Turn the heat up to high and let the mixture come to a boil
- Keep cooking at high heat for about 15-30 minutes, or until the mixture has thickened and looks like jam. The tomatoes will release some liquid during cooking, and the mixture will start to thicken once the liquid evaporates
- During this time, gently break down any tomatoes with a wooden spoon and stir the mixture from time to time to prevent it from sticking to the bottom of pan
- Once the mixture has thickened, taste for seasoning. You may want to add some more sugar or more vinegar
- Serve the tomato relish warm, or save for later in a warm sterilised jar and seal

## **Homegrown Toms**

hile the growing season for tomatoes is almost over, there's no harm in preparing for next year. The range of tomatoes available is huge and new varieties appear every year. The sheer choice is bewildering. There is no clear-cut answer as to which are the best tomato varieties – it depends on what you want them for, where you are growing them and your personal tastes. For a greenhouse, and especially for a small one, stick to cordon (pole) varieties that give the most crop for the least floor space.

## **Green Be Gone**

Summer can be quite demanding on your garden and the regular watering needed can lead to greening of brick retaining walls or raised beds. Brick, stone and block walls are porous and uneven surfaces provide the perfect surface for moss, algae or lichen to happily grow, which can become unsightly especially if you have light coloured bricks.

Unfortunately, this growth will, over a period of time, cause damage to the wall by loosening mortar and brickwork, eventually resulting in costly repairs.

A vast majority of this damage can be avoided by following some simple steps and undertaking a small amount of general maintenance regularly. If you've caught the greening before it takes hold, pressure washing will completely remove it. Remember to test the water pressure on an inconspicuous area first to check it won't damage the brick face or mortar. Generally, pressure washing is safe, but varying water pressures in different locational areas can vary results.

It's then simply just a case of washing down the walls to remove the greening. Be wary of neighbouring plants as the water pressure can tear the leaves. If you don't have a pressure washer, some soapy warm water (use biological soap to protect plants) a stiff brush and some elbow grease will take off slight greening too.

It'll come up like new! Enjoy your fresh and clean brick work once again.

## IN THE VEG GARDEN

If you've finished your annual sowing in your veg plot, bare ground can quickly become weedy. Sow green manures such as crimson clover and Italian ryegrass to act as a soil improver and to cover bare areas. When dug in, they conserve nutrients and improve soil texture with very little work. Once the land is needed for cropping again, chop the foliage down and leave it to wilt. Dig the plants and foliage into the top 25cm (10in) of soil. After digging in, the site should be left for two weeks or more before sowing or planting out as decaying green materials can hamper plant growth.



## **Astrantia Major**

#### What Looks Good This Month

This much-loved perennial ticks all the boxes for gardeners and garden designers alike. It is striking, yet in an understated way with its small pin cushion-like flowers that bloom profusely from June to September, it never fails to catch our eye.

#### Where to plant:

Astrantia major are great for sunny borders but can also tolerate partial shade, so instead of planting en masse in garden borders, planting amongst Dryopteris ferns in smaller clumps is a great way to bring a little colour to dappled shade. A dark coloured flower next to a lush green fern leaf looks particularly spectacular. Astrantia grow to up a metre in height, but do not spread very far. They are strong performers in clay and loamy soils which are moist but not wet, and will tolerate drier conditions if not prolonged.

#### Plant with:

You'll be spoilt for choice on the colour range of Astrantia, from greenish white to dark crimson red, and you can create a beautiful sweeping border in all tones of red. Frequently stocked in garden centres and used readily by garden designers in show gardens and in private gardens, don't let the Astrantia pass you by! Traditionally, a cottage garden perennial that's planted amongst





favourites such as Lupins and Delphiniums, Astrantia major is a perfect plant for attracting bees and butterflies as well as making a great cut flower. It looks stunning in a contemporary garden with heavily clipped box balls for example. Its small flowers and upright habit make it a great companion for various styles of garden.

#### Care:

Astrantia are known to self-set, so to avoid any unwanted offspring, deadhead as the flowers fade. Astrantia can be particularly favour-some to slugs, so natural and organic slug deterrent may be needed. Prune the plant down to around an inch in the autumn when the plant has fully faded, and new growth will flourish in the spring.



Our modern day lives consume our time and our minds, making little head-space for anything else and causing stress, irritability and lack of focus. We've all fallen into the trap of being 'too busy,' but we should be putting our health and wellbeing first. Good health, both physically and mentally, creates our quality of life. We should never be too busy to take care of ourselves. But just two hours a week spent in nature dramatically improves your wellbeing.

Awareness of how our environment effects our mental and physical health has increased over the past few years, with many studies proving that nature, green spaces (and socialising too) increases the positive chemicals in our brains. Spending just two hours a week in nature is linked to better health and we don't mean achieving this by working within your garden. You don't need to really be doing anything, as long as you

do it mindfully. Being mindful focuses your attention onto the specific thing you're doing at that moment in time or a specific place that you're in, so you think about nothing else, shutting off the 'noise' in your mind from the busy lives we seem to have created.

Nature and greenery have a positive, calming effect on our mood. You'll notice this more frequently now in commercial spaces, such as office blocks, where people now spend a lot of time, through the use of large planters and even green walls to bring the outside in. In our increasingly urbanised and technologically driven world, reconnecting with nature can have a huge impact on mental health. Studies have found that spending time in green spaces helps people to de-stress and relax. It also helps people to feel more at one with the world and overcome feelings of self-absorption that can increase mental health issues.

## Integrating A Hot Tub Into The Garden

ot tubs are the ultimate piece of luxury you can add to your outdoor space. Since the pandemic, hot tubs are still in high demand without any sign of cooling yet with people still craving the need for escape and relaxation from an ever-changing and stressful world.

As hot tubs often are an addition to an existing garden they can often be disjointed from the rest of the space and lack practical and attractive integration. But designing a hot tub into your garden when you are designing the rest of the space creates an impactful, intentional, and practical design. And if you have spent all that money on one, you want it to be a prominent feature for all the right reasons.

If you are looking to introduce a hot tub into your garden but feel it needs a little more pizazz than just set up on the patio, here's some great ideas to get you thinking how your hot tub could become a feature.

#### **Socialising Soak**

Combine a soak and socialising area all in one with a built-in decked frame around the tub, combining seating and storage. A hot tub can be near the home and the choice of exterior finish can help it to blend in perfectly with the surroundings. Composite steps around the tub give the impression of a sunken feeling despite it staying above ground for easier maintenance. And the steps can be utilised for setting down drinks, storing towels or extra seating when entertaining guests.

#### Sinking In

If you want your hot tub to nestle quietly into your garden or if perhaps privacy is an issue, sinking the hot tub into the ground creates a more private experience below fence line views and makes for easier entry into the spa. Not to forget that maintenance is still required, hatches built into the decking allows for fast and straightforward access into the mechanics. With a sunken hot tub

it is important to consider how you might cover the spa from the elements when not in use and the extra space required around it for maintenance access into the spa. If your garden is on a slope, you can use your space's levels to create the illusion of a sunken hot tub by utilising ground level one side and top of tub level on the other side.

#### **Simple Spa Solutions**

If you're looking for something a little simpler, a timber or aluminium structure allows you to protect your hot tub from being cluttered by leaves from surrounding trees and lets you enjoy some quiet time without having to worry about it being rained off. By including a lighting system within the roof, it creates a whole different mood in the evening time. Going further you can add screens to the sides to aid privacy or to simply shut off from the world.

#### **Benefits Of Hot Tubs**

If you are on the fence about investing in a hot tub spa then you should know all the fantastic benefits that warm restorative water can bring.

- Stress and anxiety relief When you're in your hot tub, nothing matters except how good you feel
- Better sleep Using your hot tub on a regular basis can break the cycle of insomnia and help you get to sleep
  - Lower back pain relief
- Relief from the Symptoms of Arthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis – Hydrotherapy reduces pain, tension, and joint tenderness
- Improved Range of Motion Through regular usage, your hot tub can help you restore lost flexibility and slow the natural stiffening that comes with age

There's much more to hot tubs than that little added feel of luxury they bring to your outdoor space. They're both fantastic for socialising and improving your health and wellbeing.



#### Where It Began

This new build property needed a garden to suit the home and the needs of the young family. The existing paving was ample but impractical and left the rest of the garden exposed and left to simple lawn. The shape of the garden also caused some privacy issue for our clients which they had tried to resolve but needed a more permanent solution. With a dedicated zone for the hot tub, children's play equipment and a desired tennis table, a careful layout needed to



be considered for the family.

#### The Transformation

To accommodate all the needs for the family and embracing the odd shape of the garden, a considered layout enabled the garden to be sectioned into practical zones yet provide views across the garden so the children could always be seen.

A controversial move to place the hot tub central to the garden created the viewpoint our clients wanted to achieve. It also functioned as a central hub meaning both areas of the garden could be observed for when the children were playing or the couple were entertaining guests. Archways helped make this area feel less exposed and privatised the space. Around the corner a large patio encompassed a large table tennis table and a pergola with a bar for evenings socialising out of the view of neighbours and the main view of the house.

A large patio area and play space immediately outside the lounge area with planting to soften meant this was the main spill out zone for the family to play and relax.

Now the family can enjoy the entire space for multiple needs such as relaxing, dining and cooking with the flexibility to adapt as the children get older.

#### **Get the Look**

- Florence Grey Porcelain
- Mocha Design Board
- Cinder Porcelain Planks



The Simple Solution For Zoning Your Garden

With growing families, zoning your garden enables you to create a space for everyone to enjoy at the same time, yet for different reasons.

Zoning enables you to divide your garden into individual areas for adults and children, or entertaining and relaxing sections. Careful consideration is needed here to avoid the garden having a completely divided look. Think about sections or little rooms, where each are still connected but each maintains its purpose.

Dividing your garden using planters gives you semi-permanent flexibility. As your needs change, you can move the planters to form new areas.

In both commercial and domestic installations, cost effective, large fibreglass planters can be used to create back rests for garden seating, dividing up zones without

the need to build walls, and even offering a method of screening when planting with bamboo or hedging.

The exterior texture of fibreglass planters is a stone effect, which is great for more traditional gardens. They can be galvanised metal, corten steel or super gloss, but all are frost resistant and UV protected against colour fade.

These planters are incredibly versatile and lightweight to install and can be used both indoors and outdoors. The planters themselves are completely hollow, so when filled with soil they are safe and will not move if you don't want them to, making them ideal for back rests and decorative walling.

However, if you do envisage adjusting them frequently, install heavy duty casters on the bottom so you can move them with ease.



## **Ditch Your Dreaded Timber Decking**

I'm sure you're familiar with Alan Titchmarsh. Of course, you are! He's the advocate of the infamous timber decking craze. The 90's was full of regretful trends, and sadly timber decking is one of them.

At the time it was a very popular way of creating large seating areas quickly and fairly inexpensively, but the results were often disastrous. Decaying, and downright dangerous 90's decking boards litter gardens across the country.

But with an ever-increasing uptake there's a product on the market which rights all the wrongs of timber decking – that is composite decking. Now, you may be thinking they replace one disaster with another as they contain plastic. In fact, most manufactured composite decking boards are made with up to 95% recycled materials.

And better yet, they're absolutely hassle free. No sanding, painting or staining are needed, totally eliminating one summer garden chore. They're also fade, stain, scratch and mould resistant, not to mention simple soap-and-water cleaning. A far cry from their timber counterpart.

There is just one catch, composite decking is slightly on the pricier side, but when put into context, apart from cleaning with soap and water there's zero upkeep needed for composite decking, so you can relax on your seating area, risk free. Not only that. But with the array of neutral colours available as well as luxurious wood grain patterns, your composite decking will look stunning for many years to come. Sounds like a winner to us.



If you're finding your lavender shrubs are looking shabby after only a couple of years, its mostly down to the maintenance of keeping them healthy.

Hardy lavenders can cope with temperatures down to about -15°C in freed raining soil, loamy and sandy soil types, and can be left in the garden all year round. Prune after flowering, typically in August. Many gardeners just deadhead hardy types which leads to leggy plants and few flowers. Looked after in this way the plant will be very short lived. If pruned correctly, hardy types can live for about 15 years (as many as 20 years, in some cases).

#### **Pruning technique**

Cut back quite hard with clean secateurs or shears, in a mounding shape but don't cut into old wood, as this can reduce flowering potential the following year. Be careful not to remove green shoots as this can kill the plant. Starting this maintenance regime when the plants are young means they will maintain a mounded shape and not get leggy as quick.

#### **Taking cuttings**

If you want to multiply your lavender collection you can take semi-ripe lavender cuttings in late summer.

Remove non-flowering shoots about 10cm long with a woody base, and soft new growth at the tip. Pull off some of the lower leaves. Fill plastic pots with peat-free multi-purpose compost, water and then push the cuttings into the compost. About 1cm should be below the soil. Cover pots with a clear plastic bag and place in a light and airy place. A greenhouse is ideal.



double whammy with this one! Contemporary gardens are wonderful but what if your space contains mostly shade? You don't need a particularly sunny spot to achieve the contemporary borders that fill Instagram and Pinterest feeds. In fact, contemporary gardens are mostly about lush greens and structure. The perfect recipe for shady borders.

Striking colours are often not part and parcel of shady borders. So lower your expectations there. It's mostly about white and greens, the palette which thrives in shade.

Create an easy care structure throughout your borders with mound-forming evergreen such as box balls which love the shade and architectural specimens like fatsia, then weave through shade loving grasses, hosta and ferns for added texture and interest. When flowers and colour aren't the main focus, you want to think more about structure and

texture to create the interest. It's the contrast between hard and soft structure which works delightfully in many contemporary schemes.

To add height, introduce trees or tree-like shrubs, but be mindful that adding trees may dry up the soil in the long term. Specimens such as acers look great in contemporary gardens next to crisp walls and smooth porcelain. And for something taller, standard Portuguese laurel will add to year round greenery.

Think about the seasons too. Many lovely bulbs like snowdrops and bluebells work well in partial shade nearer the front of borders or in containers.

For more plant selection ideas here's our specialist picks for a shady contemporary border:

#### OUR SPECIALIST PICKS:

#### **Evergreen structure:**

- Prunus 'Otto Luyken'
- Buxus balls
- Fatsia japonica

#### Seasonal shrubs:

- Vibrunum x juddii
- Hydrnage 'Ananabelle'

#### **Grasses:**

Carex 'Ice Dance'

- Luzula sylvatica
- Hakenchloa macra
- Anemanthele lessoniana

#### **Perennials:**

- Polystichum setiferum
- Asarum europaeum
- Begenia



Fatsia japonica

## PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



#### PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

#### **Corten Steel**

Originally developed for building coal carriages in 1930s America, Corten Steel is now one of the most stylish and durable metals on the market. Corten steel plate might look like it's rusty, but the outer oxidisation protects the steel from further corrosion, as well as giving it a unique, industrial look.

#### **Design Uses**

Perfect for planters, lawn edging, fabricated for large retaining walls, steps and other garden features such as water features, it's incredibly versatile.

The natural patina adds a rustic yet modern look to any garden.

#### Works Well With

Corten steel looks stunning in modern gardens paired with porcelain paving for a contrasting effect. The rusty look lends itself to industrial vibes, complementing anthracite aluminium pergolas or window frames on the home.

#### **Pros**

Can be fabricated for bespoke projects. While rusting is problematic in steel, the rust on corten will only form in the outer layer of the steel which will then turn into a protective barrier that aids the resistance of future corrosion.

#### Cons

It can stain painted walls, stonework, render, concrete driveways and sidewalks, and some other materials from runoff while it is in the process of rusting and somewhat thereafter. Keep this in consideration when deciding on where to place it.



## PUZZLE PAGE

#### Can You Find These 7 Summer Plants In The Word Search?

W X X W Q Q D Z Н Ν C Ε C Ν Α Ε K Ν G Н Q Ζ D Z Υ Н S U 0 L Ν X Н X K Ν S ı G S Р П J Ν 0 D 0 П K F X Q Α G V L F Α S Ν M L Υ 0 R D W L R X Н Y Q S Н Ν R K Ν K Ν Ε S X Т Т X Н U L Ε П Ε U Н Υ K W Τ K Y Z D K K F Α M X Ζ C S X S Α S Ζ В L Q В R G G Ε S Ε R Н Н D Ν Α П R Т D S C Q Ζ W D Α D O W S В J J U J K F Α S Т Ε R P В Q 0 Q F M Т Ν Q ı M R F Т Ν L K Р Н U M Р S

#### Here's Some Clues to Help You

- 1. Known as coneflower. Good herb for colds
- 2. Also called Black Eyed Susan, sunshine yellow flowers
- 3. Commonly known as stonecrop, succulent leaves
- 4. An abundance of daisy-like flowers

- 5. Japanese variety, tall, white flower tinged with pink
- 6. Commonly known as Red-Hot Poker
- 7. A herb and ornamental, mostly purple in flower

Thank You for your continued support...

"Absolutely outstanding service. Every stage of the process, from initial discussions and idea gathering, through the garden design, visual presentations and construction was exemplary."

# Autumn is the New Summer

## Extend the Pleasures of the Outdoor Season...

With a Stunning, All Year Round, All Weather Garden Design

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