# THE DESIGNER'S GUIDE TO CREATING THE PERFECT GARDEN



Winter Jobs in the Garden

Thinking to Transform Your Garden Now? Patios in the Spotlight

# Welcome.

While it could be argued that gardens aren't at their best during the darker times of the year, visiting some of our well-kept public spaces may give you some ideas on how to plant your garden so that it looks great in the winter too.

This doesn't mean plants have to be in full bloom over the winter, ornamental grasses and architectural perennials can offer wonderful form and structure even when they've technically finished for the year. I have spoken many times about avoiding the autumn prune and planting more perennials over evergreen shrubs.

Shrubs are not my favourite when used en masse. I'd rather punctuate a garden with key specimen shrubs or multistem trees than ribbon the rest of the garden with long season perennials and utilise the grasses and seedheads for winter interest. But everyone has a different style. Embrace what each season can provide rather than forcing something unnatural.

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# **December 2025**

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While our gardens can withstand a certain amount of water, prolonged spells of sitting water may cause some damage. A few simple steps can help ease the strain on your garden.

Soils become waterlogged when water builds up and is unable to drain away. Prolonged periods of sitting in ground saturated with water leaves a lack of air spaces in the saturated soil, causing yellow leaves, root rot and death. Plant roots literally drown.

The good news is that short-lived, flash floods after a downpour seldom harm most plants. It is prolonged, saturated soil that causes the most damage. With localised

flooding becoming more common, conditions can be improved using various techniques to promote drainage and prevent damage.

In the short term, wash down hard surfaces after flooding and collect up debris to prevent drains blocking, soil surfaces being covered, and pollutants or contaminants lingering in the garden. Keep off the soil until it is workable, to avoid compacting it and worsening the condition, and remove damaged shoots from affected plants if you can get to them. If plants have noticeably suffered, apply a balanced fertiliser in the spring, mulching over the root area after application to encourage strong new growth.





Start to winter-prune wisteria, cutting back summer sideshoots to two or three buds



Leave the faded flower heads on your hydrangeas until spring, as they provide frost protection to the swelling buds further down the stems



Lift and store dahlia tubers once their leaves are blackened by frost



if you haven't already done so, clean out the greenhouse thoroughly

# THOUGHTS OF A GARDEN DESIGNER

# Thinking About Transforming Your Garden?

# This Winter Could Be the Perfect Time to Get Started

Did you know most homeowners looking to transform their garden space believe the best time to get their garden designed and built is in the spring and summer?

Now, strictly speaking, summer is the best time for landscaping because it's warm, relatively dry and the days are longer... It's a more pleasant time to be outdoors, right?

But, that's precisely why you shouldn't be having your garden built during the spring and summer.

Winter is cold and wet, and most landscaping companies will stop work during the colder months.

If you're out enjoying your garden during the summer as you should be, you don't want to be disturbed by landscaping work going on around you.

Why Is Winter Really the Best Time to Get Your Garden Transformed?

It's the best time for these **5** reasons:

- 1. You're not using your garden during the winter So it's the best time to construct! Need we say anymore.
- 2. Available start dates are likely to be

**sooner -** In the springtime, everyone has the same idea... 'I must get the garden sorted this year.' So availability is much better in the winter.

- **3. Your garden will mature quicker -** By planting in the winter your garden plants establish quicker, as they have longer in the ground before spring which means; a more mature garden, quicker! (Container plants can be planted any time in dry and non-frosty conditions).
- **4. It's ready for when you want to use it -** That's why it makes perfect sense to get your garden transformed this winter so it's ready to enjoy in the spring and summer without any delay whatsoever.
- **5. Zero maintenance -** You won't see any new growth in plants until spring. This means there will be zero maintenance (cutting the grass pruning and cutting back trees) at least until the springtime.

Perhaps you've been thinking about transforming your garden for a while, yet you haven't managed to get started...

Or maybe you've been putting it off because you've been using your garden this summer...

GET STARTED TODAY! (ALL ON 02080 872334

# **Hedging for a Purpose**

Creating barriers from planting creates a much softer feeling, encourages wildlife and can even help reduce surface water. Here's some great ways that hedging can be used in gardens to aid the design or help resolve problems.

# **Zoning the Garden**

Dividing the garden into zones creates an interesting and practical design. Using low hedging to divide the garden creates partitioned zones without blocking the garden off from the rest of the space. This gives you great motivation to journey around the space, focusing on distinct seating areas or entertaining spaces.

Low hedging plants for zoning:

- · Prunus lusitanica (Portuguese Laurel)
- · Lavandula angustifolia (Lavender)
- Euonymus 'Jean Hughes' (Japanese spindle)

### **Noise Reduction**

If you live near a busy road or school perhaps, a hedge can help reduce traffic noise. The leaves and stems themselves form a physical barrier. Evergreens are often the best choices as they have dense canopies, reducing noise by up to 8dB.

Clipping the hedges helps improve their vigour, encouraging new growth from side stems and forming a denser surface over 5-15 years. It is important to note that hedging for noise reduction takes time to mature and reduce the noise. Even tall hedging units will need time to thicken up from annual trimming.

Hedging plants for noise reduction:

- · Thuja plicata (Western red cedar)
- · Prunus laurocerasus (Cherry laurel)
- Taxus baccata (Yew)
- Ilex aquifolium (Holly)

### **Encouraging Wildlife**

Most hedging provides shelter for birds, and some (mostly native species) provide berries for birds and pollen and nectar for bees and butterflies. Planting a mixed native hedge - often inexpensive to buy

during bare root season from RSPB - extends flowering and fruiting times to encourage wildlife over a longer season, benefiting both them and you. Supporting wildlife isn't just about planting a hedge, so don't forget to include other insect and bird friendly plants in your garden.

Hedging plants to support wildlife:

- · Fagus sylvatica (Beech)
- Crategeus monogyma (Hawthorn)
- · Pyracantha (Firethorn)
- · Rosa canina (Wild dog rose)

### **Screening**

Instant hedging, can be a great way to distract attention from a view where height required to fully screening is more than 2m. If a neighbouring drive or garage wall is bothering you, often a hedge of up to 2m is enough to distract your eye so the object becomes less offensive.

- · Prunus laurocerasus (Cherry laurel)
- · Ligustrum (Privet)
- · Carpinus betulus (Hornbeam)
- · Taxus baccata (Yew)

# **Security**

If you need to create a boundary line to prevent people (or animals) from venturing into part of your garden, spiky or thorny hedges are the best deterrents. They can still look attractive and provide benefits for wildlife, but the prickly stems will prevent unwanted intruders.

Hedging plants for security

- · Crategeus monogyma (Hawthorn)
- · Pyracantha (Firethorn)
- · Prunus spinosa (Blackthorn)
- · Berberis x ottawensis

# **How to Plant Hedges**

Evergreen and semi-evergreen hedges are best planted in late-October, early November and March when bare root season is available. Deciduous hedges can be planted from late October until March, as long as the ground is not waterlogged or frozen at the time of planting.

# From the Outdoor Kitchen

# Classic Jeck & Potato Como

This classic leek and potato soup is a staple at this time of year as juicy leeks are available to harvest this month. However, the green ends of leeks can be very long, so trim off the straggly, darkest bits. They will keep in the freezer until you need them.

### Recipe

- **Knob of butter**
- Splash of oil
- 600g of leeks, trimmed and very finely sliced
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and chopped
- 1.5 litres vegetable or chicken stock
- 150ml single cream





### Method

- Melt a knob of butter in a large pan with a little oil, add all the leeks except a handful and stir. Cook gently until the leeks are very soft, this will take about 10 minutes. Add the potatoes, season well, then add the stock, bring to a simmer and cook until the potato is soft. Whizz everything
  - with a blender until smooth. Add the cream and season again if required. If the soup is very thick, add a little water, stock or milk. Keep warm.
- Heat 1cm oil in a small pan, add the remaining leeks and cook until it frizzles. Lift out and drain. Serve the soup and add some frizzled leeks to the top.

# **Recipe Tips**

Soup doesn't have to be boring or predictable, spice it up a bit! Try grilling, toasting or baking chunky croutons or slices of ciabatta bread to serve alongside, or tear in soft herbs at the last minute for an added flavour boost.

Any piece of bread that has been toasted or fried to crunchy crispness counts as a crouton. These are easy to make and are a very useful way of using up leftover bread as well as adding a crunch and texture to salads, soups, vegetable dishes and even

You can use any type of bread to make croutons, though some varieties work better than others. Thicker slices will always make a better crouton than thin slices; anything with too much crust can end up quite hard; and bread with too many holes may not give a very satisfying result.



As we approach the shortest day of the year in December with the need to keep warm when outside, some of your plants may also need to be kept warm.

Check your winter protection and if you have a greenhouse make sure the heater is working. If you don't have an electric source in your greenhouse, insulating material such as bubble wrap works well.

A good garden activity when its cooler outside is to clean all your old pots and seed trays in your greenhouse, garage or garden shed so that they are ready for next

spring. Thorough cleaning will reduce any issues with pests and diseases and will also reduce your propagation and sowing problems.

It is common to find growths such as algae, lichens, liverworts and moss growing on hard surfaces. Contrary to popular belief, these do not damage the surfaces they grow on, but can cause patios, drives, paths and steps to become slippery, especially when its wet or frosty! A good hard brush and a jet wash will remove most of the moss and algae, but be careful to do this on a day when it's not going to freeze over again.

# IN THE VEG GARDEN

# **Leafy Greens**

When the cold snap really takes a hold, cut and come again salad leaves can still be grown on a warm kitchen windowsill. A method of harvesting leafy crops so the plants continue to grow and sprout further leaves, provides several pickings over a long period. Snip off just a few outer leaves from each plant, rather than all of them, leaving the inner leaves to grow for picking in a few weeks. Suitable candidates include lettuces and most types of salad leaves, as well as chard, spinach, mizuna and kale.



# Hamamelis x Intermedia 'Pallida''

What Looks Good This Month

ighly fragrant sulphur yellow flowers are borne in January – February, making this an absolute must as a specimen shrub for the winter. The flowers are followed by large, green foliage that turns yellow and orange in autumn, before falling to reveal their arching and spreading form. Where some deciduous shrubs can be lacklustre in the winter, this one really shines. Hamamelis are also of great value to wildlife. The flower, almost spidery in appearance, displays the brightest on the darkest of winter days, making it quite a stunner in the colder months.

### Where to Plant:

Hamamelis x intermedia 'Pallida' has deservedly received the 'RHS Award of Garden Merit'. It's considered to be medium sized, so expect a height and spread of 4 x 4 metres in 20 years. When given a well-drained, acid - neutral soil in partial shade or full sun, a smaller size can be maintained with annual pruning. This yellow Witch Hazel will also tolerate some wind exposure if planting in an open border.





### **Plant With:**

The yellow, fruit scented flowers cover the beautifully architectural vase shaped form of this yellow Witch Hazel shrub. Due to its vase shape, open ground is left below it, so low level underplanting such as Hellebores or Aconites will really make the most of the winter colour.

### Care:

Feed and water regularly throughout the growing season until young plants become established. Prune hamamelis in spring, immediately after flowering. Remove any damaged or diseased stems and lightly shape the plant. After pruning, apply a mulch of well-rotted manure or garden compost to the base of the shrub.



# **Garden Trends for 2026**

Garden trends lean more into growing conditions and the way people live their lives rather than advice on garden paving or the colour of furniture - which is helpful in an ever-changing world!

Here's three of the best trends we've collated for the new year.

Green Living: The escalating environmental issues have pushed the concept of sustainability into the forward from everyones minds with homeowners gravitating towards green practices and materials in their outdoor spaces from water saving systems, renewable and sustainable materials, minimising water and the adaptation of circular economy.

The Home's Natural Extension: Outdoor living spaces are becoming seamless extensions of the home, carving out spaces for relaxation, entertainment, and

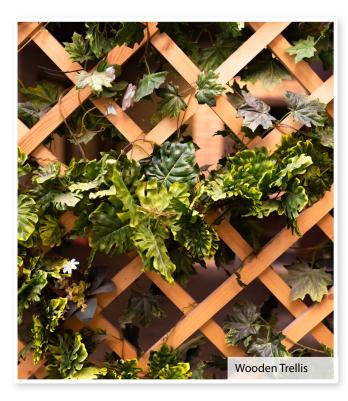
communion with nature. Homeowners are channeling investments into aesthetic and functional outdoor zones furnished with cosy zoned seating arrangements, outdoor kitchens, inclusive fire pits, and soft whimsical planting.

Dark and Moody: This year will see darker colours used in gardens, as moody aesthetics are favoured as backdrops such as fences and in planting schemes. Purples, dark reds and blues will fill borders with only a small number of vibrant coloured plants to contrast. There will be shifts towards dark foliage with intense shades of purple or brown forming an intense and intimate settings.

Trends aren't meant to be followed strictly, but they do give you some ideas towards creativity and more importantly, sustainability.

# The Transformative Effects Of Well-Maintained Boundary

Garden boundaries are so important. They make your garden safe, define what's yours (and what isn't) and protect your garden from the elements. And they are really important at this time of year when the garden is at its barest. But when it comes to a garden transformation its often the first thing to become neglected or get forgotten about - not from designers but as a way to save money.



For designers, boundaries make or break a garden. They can become such as important feature in the redesign of a garden, becoming a beautiful feature themselves or being styled in such a way to show off the rest of the garden. Having a stunningly landscaped garden, but leaving shabby fencing behind it brings down the overall effect of your garden. Quite frankly it dulls the shine.

Simply adding linear trellis in front, or even painting the fence, has transformative effects on your garden. For example, linear trellis modernises a garden, showing off clean and contemporary paving. Or painting a fence black, or a dark colour, showcases vivid green planting in front and



almost blurs the boundaries - making your garden feel endless.

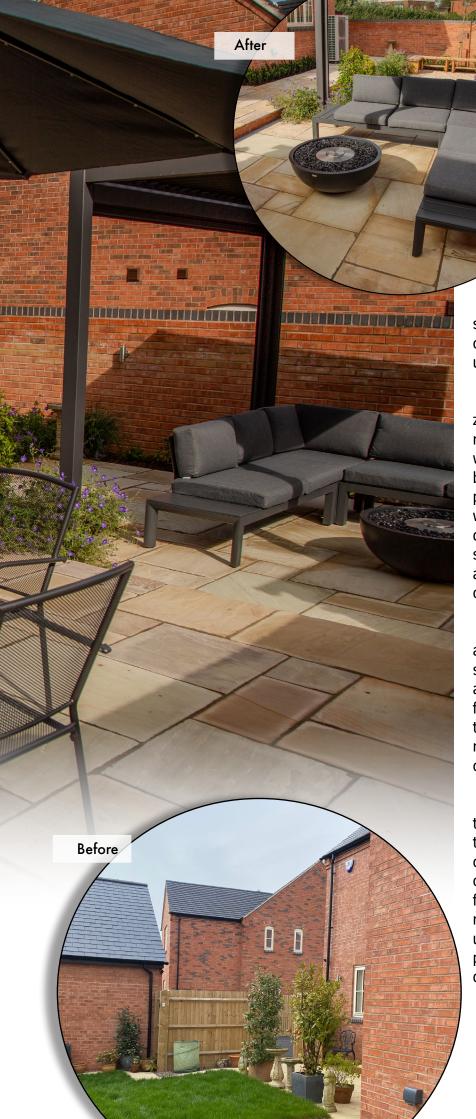
It's clear to see from the before and after images above, how the boundaries make this garden, creating privacy, defining its style and creating a fully cohesive design.

Composite fencing is having a huge effect on the fencing market as it's a timber free product, simple to look after and creates beautifully modern backdrops.

So when it comes to improving your garden, focus your attention on your boundaries. Is your fence falling apart, leaning, or in need of a lick of paint? Before you focus your attention on fixing everything else, see for yourself what just changing your fence can do to the feel of your garden.



In the heart of a newly development urban environment, a small new build courtyard garden emerged as a testament to the transformative power of thoughtful design. The project aimed to convert a undeveloped outdoor space into a thriving oasis, seamlessly blending functionality, aesthetics, and privacy.



Given the limited square footage, the primary challenge was to optimise the available space for various activities without feeling cramped. Our clients desired a peaceful designed to be enjoyable in all seasons, with strategic plant selections for seasonal interest and comfortable seating for year-round use

The space was divided into distinct zones, including a dining area nearest to the house, lounging space with louvered aluminium pergola and bioethanol fire pit, low level textural planting highlighting the beautiful wall around the boundary and a quiet bench area. Each serving a specific purpose while maintaining a harmonious flow throughout the compact space.

Tall, strategically placed tree and pergola, including privacy screens were introduced to create a secluded environment shielded from neighbouring eyes. And textural, tumbled landscaping materials created a rustic yet modern courtyard space.

This case study highlights the potential for meaningful transformation, even in the smallest of urban spaces. The thoughtful combination of aesthetics, functionality, and privacy has resulted in a small yet impactful urban oasis that adds value to the property and enhances the overall quality of life for our clients.



# **Patios in the Spotlight**

hen designing a new patio into your garden, there's considerations to bear in mind whilst making your decisions. Firstly, you need to look at how to combine these with the sunlight we have available to us in our not always sunny climes.

Watching the position of the sun helps you to maximise the use of your garden. regardless of the season. Often, patios are positioned with functionality in mind, but a smaller 'spotlight' patio could be the perfect feature for your garden, giving you additional utility all year round.

Often, we think a patio should be situated straight outside the back door because that's what we're used to seeing. In fact, this isn't wrong. You should have some form of hard standing outside the back doors, but its size and style will depend on whether that is the space where you'll spend most of your time when outdoors.

This is where 'spotlight' patios play their part. A 'spotlight' patio is a smaller accent to your main patio.

The position of your garden as a whole will have a bearing on how you use it. And the sun's position during the day will have the biggest influence in this decision.

East Facing Garden - You'll see more sun in the morning

West Facing Garden - You'll see more sun in the afternoon

North Facing Garden - You'll see far less sun than a south facing garden

Also consider your viewpoint. Which view do you want to avoid or enjoy the most? This plays a role in where you may want to position your spotlight patio.

You'll know what a difference the sunshine can make to your day. Even the coldest of days can feel fantastic if you're wrapped up warm with the sunlight on your face. With this in mind, the autumn and winter can be great times to think ahead about the landscaping of your garden while it's not seeing as much traffic as the warmer months.



You can create your own Christmas wreath using greenery from your own garden with these few simple steps. It's a great way to get in the festive mood and enjoy a couple of hours with nature.

You will need:

- · 12-inch wire ring
- · Spagnum moss
- · Floristry wire
- · Greenery (of any kind but you will need an evergreen majority, like spruce, conifer, eucalyptus or holly, or go foraging in your own garden for suitable material)
  - · Twigs, cones, decor and ribbon

## Step 1

To begin, with a few twists attach one end of the reel wire to your frame.

### Step 2

Secure bundles of bunched up moss to the frame by wrapping the reel wire around them. We use moss as it gives depth to the wreath – it will also provide moisture for the foliage you'll be adding later.

### Step 3

Continue adding bunches of moss until the whole frame is covered with an even distribution. Keep the reel wire attached to the wreath. Assemble small bundles of your mixed foliage and pine – it works best to keep larger bits of foliage and pine at the back of the bundle.

# Step 4

Lay a bundle of foliage on the wreath and secure firmly using the reel wire. Add more bundles in the same direction, overlapping with the previous one.

# Step 5

Continue adding bundles of leaves until the frame is evenly covered. Cut the reel wire, leaving enough to secure at the back by twisting it around itself.

### Step 6

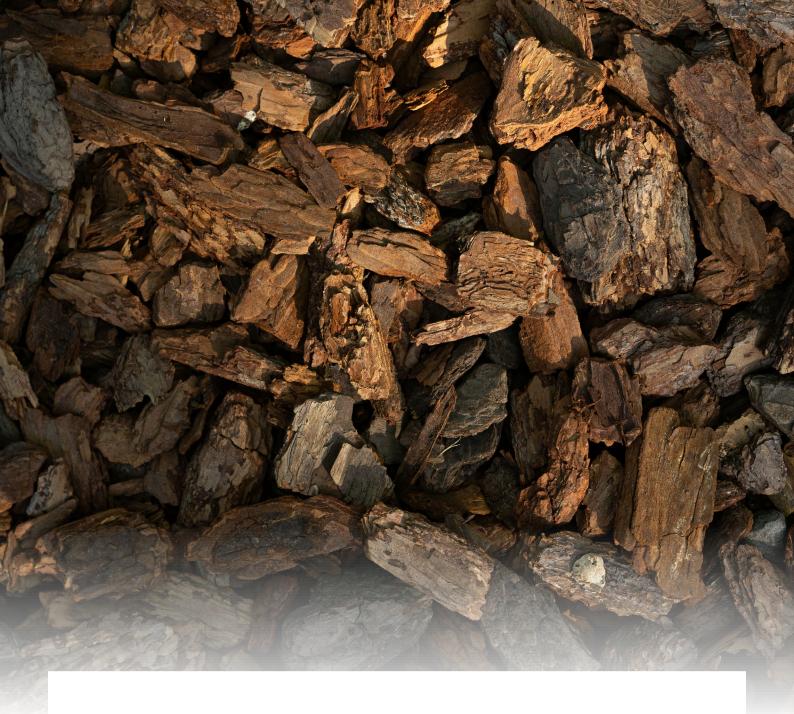
Attach a ribbon by doubling it around your wreath underneath the foliage, leaving it long enough to attach to your door. It's a good idea to hold up the wreath and look at the shape before you decide where to attach the ribbon.

### Step 7

Cut long lengths of reel wire to attach decorations to the wreath. Bend the wire in half and attach with a few twists around a suitable point on your decoration (such as the stem or around the pine cone).

### Step 8

Attach the decorations at random intervals around the wreath by separating out the strands of the wire and securing them at the back of the wreath with a few twists. Use the ribbon to add a bow. Hang your wreath on a door or suitable place and enjoy your Christmas wreath



# **Mulching Mad**

Now is the time to protect and prepare your soil for the next growing season, and you can do so by replenishing mulch. Mulch is a thick layer of organic matter (such a leaf mould or bark chippings) applied to the soil's surface.

Winter mulching has the same advantages as summer mulching. By adding a thick layer of mulch to the soil exterior, it will help the soil transition into winter and adjust its moisture and temperatures. In the winter, mulch keeps the soil warmer, and in the

summer it keeps it cooler. A winter mulch is beneficial if you have clay soil where a hard frost can be damaging to your plant's vulnerable root systems. Not only does mulch aid in the insulation of your soil, but it also helps your borders look clean and tidy.

After mulching, you can plant your spring bulbs. Bulbs, such as daffodils and snowdrops, like free-draining, well-fertilised soil. Dig up two or three times the depth of the bulb itself and leave the same amount of space between each of them.



erns are often thought of as damp, lovers of shade in woodland canopies near streams. Whilst this is mainly true, there are varieties which are tolerant of drier conditions and even sun! Ferns are versatile, deciduous to fully evergreen, so everyone can have ferns in their gardens. They are easy to grow, long-lived and require almost zero care.

Ferns bring fabulous texture to borders. Perfectly matched with structural shrubs or perennials their softness creates a whimsical, yet calming feeling in any space.

Some ferns are quite big and can be used as specimens themselves – such as tree ferns, for example. The elevated fronds from a furry

trunk has something almost prehistoric about them, which really adds the wow factor – they are particular about their conditions, however, so do your research and buy from a reasonable retailer as they are a protected species.

If growing ferns in drier conditions, it is important to pick a tolerant variety. It will still need sufficient watering in its first year of establishment before it can be left to fend mostly for itself. Adding organic matter in drier soil is always advised. For sunshine, it is important to note that some ferns will tolerate sun, but it is not necessarily their preference.

Matteuccia struthiopteris

# FERNS FOR ALL GARDENS

# **Ferns for Damp Shade:**

- Athyrium filix-femina
- Matteuccia struthiopteris
- Blechnum spicant

# **Ferns for Dry Shade:**

- · Polystichum aculeatum
- Dryopteris filix-mas 'Parsley'
- · Polypodium vulgare

'Bifidomultifidum'

# Ferns for Well-Drained Sun:

- Dryopteris affinis 'Cristata'
- Dryopteris erythrosora
- Dryopteris affinis

Dryopteris filix-mas 'Parsley'

# PRODUCT OF THE MONTH



# **Cedar Cladding**

# PRODUCT DESCRIPTION

Western Red Cedar is a durable, sustainable resource combining natural beauty, stability, durability and decay resistance

# **Design Uses**

Great for cladding garden buildings, decking, trellis work or to clad an existing fence when you want to increase boundary heights or disguise an ugly fence.

## Works Well With

Beautiful for contemporary gardens, paired with warm toned paving and anthracite features such as aluminium pergola for a striking look. It can be used in traditional gardens also when paired with clay pavers or tumbled setts

### **Pros**

There is no doubt about it, timber cladding is stunning. Timber merges well with natural surroundings, creating a seamless blend between the environment and buildings. It brings nature into urban settings

## Cons

Once exposed to sunlight these colours gradually fade to a silver-grey colour. How-ever, the colour can be retained by treating. It can also be expensive compared to planed timber



# PUZZLE PAGE

# Can You Find These Christmas Tree Varieties?

```
JWEALLUDAKXHXLU
    IALTUBLT
               JVJAGEHS
MXBUCBNGZRSXYBWH
   EFJUGMMZLUECGY
   SQSLBUOZKOTNXA
    DFCUGENCEQOHAOD
   ROHIOIZUMRERMLHMV
    UPEUFVRRAQWXVQA
AYOCUMBCWCEEMUAQYBNA
HANEEYGDQHWIZOYFPWNB
UQBYYKFXHGDHGDSSDZF
      ANSPRUCEBP
                  V P O
      SFSSKVCNYRAXKR
DHWQUXELKNZEP
NOZYORQNTPPCVYCWT
      IDFOVMGHTEGA
   A R
                NEFKP
V D V C W V S C O T S P
K C V A O C F P T K B H N G B K Q A U K
P S D O U G L A S F I R D F C Y Q A D F
GWJZPSKUXBYPLTBNLIVG
```

# Here's Some Clues to Help You

- 1. Conifer from a Scandinavian country
- Its needles will stay attached throughout the festive season
- 3. Chunky glaucous blue foliage

- 4. Slender tree of narrow, conical habit
- 5. A fir with a male name
- 6. Desired for its long keep ability
- 7. Most common Christmas Tree

Thank You for your continued support...

"Fantastic service from start to finish.

Nothing was too much trouble for all the teams involved from design to installation. They even arrange a cleaner at the end of the works to ensure everything's spotless to enjoy your new garden."

# New Year New Garden

Make 2026 the year you fall in love with your outdoor space...

Transform Your Garden This Season and Enjoy It All Year-Round

... Call Our Friendly Team to Arrange **Your** Design Consultation Today



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