



GET A HEDGEHOG-FRIENDLY GARDEN

Garden know-how:

Rob Jones

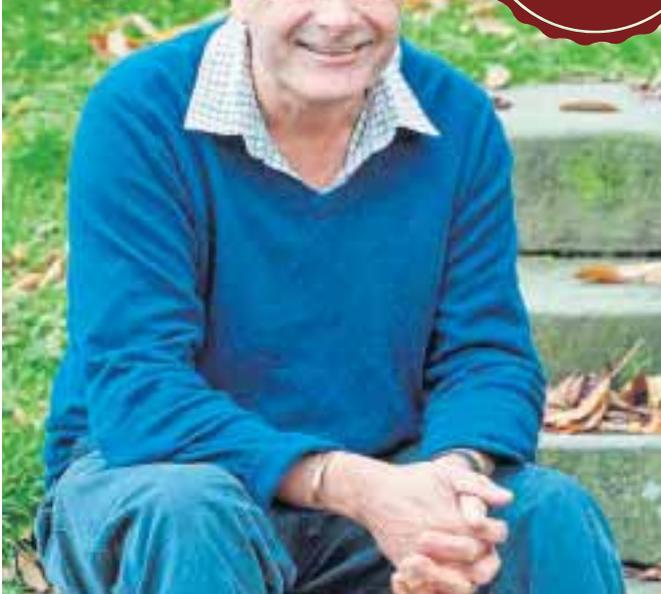


PHOTO: MARK LOBO

How can I encourage wildlife into my fairly small garden?

Make sure you create a hedgehog highway by having a hole 13cm x 13cm at the bottom of your fence. Go online and look at hedgehogstreet.org for ideas. Also, invest in a properly designed eco bug hotel, which can be filled with composting leaves to provide a great place for hedgehogs to shelter over winter. We make ours from recycled pallets and use leftover building materials, all of which creates areas to harbour lacewings, slow worms and stag beetles. The Garden Design Company produces some (pictured right, gardendesignco.co.uk), but the RSPB has tips online to help you DIY (rspb.org.net).



GIVE YOUR GARDEN ROOM TO GROW

Rob Jones on great paving and cultivating fruit and vegetables in a small space

Our Victorian terrace has a small garden. I don't want a square of grass. Any ideas?

ABG - aka, anything but grass! Who wants to mow a tiny patch every weekend? Instead, consider beautiful paving or stones. Go large and pale. Small gardens are often shadier and the large natural paving designs such as Porcelain by londonstone.co.uk (£62.70 per sq m) will help suggest the garden is larger than it is. Big, bold plants will also create real impact; specimen plants cost more but you need fewer of them. Try large-leafed Hosta Aureomarginata for damp, shady city gardens. You can also protect your plants from slugs using Nematodes, a natural predator bought from gardenorganic.org.uk. To help disguise the boundary between you and your neighbours, consider using slatted screening to soften the impact. The best value are the off-the-shelf narrow slats from gardentrellis.co.uk. They have a fantastic range, so you will always find something you like. You can buy treated but unpainted designs and paint in any colour with a durable paint from tekno.com.



or Amelanchiers, which provide a stunning blossom in the spring and good autumn colour, available from hilliers.co.uk.

Is it possible to grow fruit and vegetables in a small space?

Yes, it's perfectly possible to grow fruit and vegetables in any size garden, even on a small balcony. Blueberries, cucumbers and strawberries all thrive well in containers on decking or balconies during the spring and summer months. For this time of year, winter lettuce such as Elan and Winter Density (unwins.co.uk) can both be sown until October or November - it's also the perfect time of year to sow Japanese onion sets, red onions and garlic.

What jobs are vital for prepping my garden for winter, and what can I leave?

If you do have a lawn, keep the grass clear of leaves, but leave some on the borders to provide habitats for insects. Leave some fruit rotting for the birds and don't be too quick to deadhead flowers, as the seed heads provide a natural free food resource for birds. People worry about having to suddenly prune during winter so remember a good rule of thumb: prune after flowering but not if the plant flowers in autumn. Leave this until Easter when the worst of the cold weather will have gone.

■ Rob Jones set up The Garden Design Company 21 years ago, gardendesignco.co.uk

INTERVIEW BY LARA SARGENT



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