

gardens

transform your **GARDEN**

late April or May, when the risk of frost has passed. If in doubt, always check the label or ask at the garden centre before planting.

In larger gardens, Tony Chipps sometimes favours prairie planting schemes. This consists of ornamental grasses mixed with herbaceous plants.

He explained: 'This is quite labour saving because the plants flourish without much attention. They go a lovely golden brown in the autumn, with decorative seed heads. Then you simply cut it all down in spring and the whole cycle starts again.'

He is sometimes asked to create a wildlife garden or a wildlife area. He likes to provide a pond or bog garden and sometimes uses native mixed wildflower meadow seed and/or mixed native hedgerow plants.

He finds that some people are keen to have a gravel garden.

'I do this by putting down a weed proof membrane, and putting in plants in groups, surrounded by rounded Scottish or Atlantic pebbles. The membrane lets water through and stops weeds coming up. The pebbles are much neater and nicer than pea shingle or beach pebbles.'

Hampshire garden designer Lisa Potter has her own distinctive planting style, with contrasting textures and colours of foliage.

She finds that clients often ask for low-maintenance planting, so she usually aims to produce a garden which is about 90 per cent evergreen.

This is easy to maintain and always looks good, both winter and summer. She often chooses shrubs and perennial plants with attractive flowers, berries or seed heads.

She said: 'My philosophy is to create a beautiful space which is also practical and usable, so that it meets the client's needs.'

'I like to divide the garden into separate areas or 'rooms', because this makes the space seem much larger.'

'I also think about focal points from the windows and doors, so that there is a view from the house all the year round.'

Portsmouth garden designer Mary Kells finds that some of her clients ask for labour saving planting, whereas others want to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

'There is a great interest in productive gardening', she said.

'Sometimes I provide a vegetable area. I recommend raised beds, which are very advantageous for growing vegetables. Sometimes people want to incorporate vegetables into the flower planting. This is rather like traditional cottage-style gardening, where lettuces and tomatoes and so on are grown among the flowers.'

'You can also grow vegetables successfully in containers, but it is perhaps worth pointing out that running a full-scale vegetable plot is not a low maintenance activity, as there is a lot of work preparing the beds and tending the crops.'

With this advice in mind it is a good idea to consider how much time you are willing to spend on gardening. If time is limited, concentrate on trees, shrubs and ground cover. Evergreen foliage plants will help to make sure the garden looks good all year round.

Colour schemes are important too and help to create a harmonious effect.

Books, magazines and websites all have vast amounts of advice on planting your garden, so you may wish to do some reading before you start.

Remember that many experienced gardeners believe that the best results are achieved by careful preparation, rather than a hasty Ground Force-style instant makeover.

So start planning now so you can transform your garden in time for summer!

Contact details

Tony Chipps: 023 9266 5763, 07789 823531.
www.morpheusgd.co.uk

Mary Kells: 023 9236 6838, 07846 951285
www.marykellsgardensdesign.co.uk

Lisa Potter: 023 8026 1490, 077 8239 9962.
www.room-with-a-view.co.uk

B&Q: www.diy.com

Homebase: www.homebase.co.uk