



# Introduction

Changing your garden can be one of the most exciting things you can do with your home. The scope for change and the possibilities for improvement are endless. Unlike inside, in the garden you don't have to worry about what the space is for – it's not a kitchen or a bedroom – it's a space. A space for you.



## Have fun

So whatever your taste, whatever your style, you can indulge yourself in your garden – you can let your imagination run riot and have fun. Inside the house you're much more constrained by practicalities but outside you can create spaces, make new rooms, indulge your fantasies ... in short, go to town. And you can do this any way you like, you don't have to follow the rules or do sketches and scale drawings. Some of the most successful gardens I've ever been in have been laid out directly on the ground and created on the spot – no preamble, no plans. But it doesn't always come this easy.

## Getting stuck

When people do get stuck with their gardens, the two things they often say are – 'I don't know where to start' or 'I've got so many ideas I can't decide'. This is where a little help, a defined way to get to a finished design, can come in handy.

## Step by step

There is a logical process to designing gardens, a number of steps to go through. I haven't invented it – they teach it in garden design schools and it does work. What I have done is simplify it and, I think, boiled the whole thing down to its basics so it's even easier to pick up. The first four steps are all about gathering information, once you've got all that information it's easier to create a great plan. It's about combining what you need, with what you want, with what you've got. Once all that information is collected you make the spaces in the garden, construct it and decorate it. Sounds easy.

### TIP

If you really do get stuck ask a garden designer to come and have a look at the garden for a couple of hours. Most designers offer this service and it can really help overcome specific problems and set you on your way.

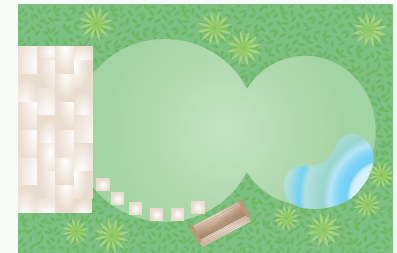
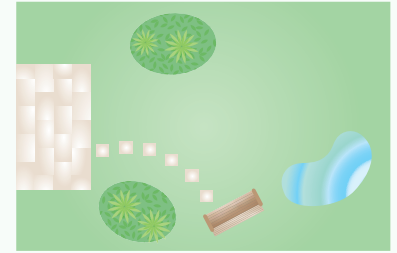
## Creating rooms

Later in the book I'll go on a lot about 'creating rooms' in the garden, it's a crucial point to getting a great design. When I teach garden design, before they start, people will often come up with something like this ...

This is placing the elements where you want them; it's not going to give a strong design.

Take the same garden and think about creating nicely proportioned spaces and you start to get something like this ...

You can still have the lawn, seat and flower beds where you wanted them but, because we've started by making nicely proportioned shapes that will feel good to be in, it will be a good strong design.



## Or just enjoy the pictures ...

In this book I've outlined 10 steps to get a great garden. Follow them and you should end up not only with a beautiful garden but also with one that works and does all you need it to. You don't have to go through the whole lot if you don't want to. It would be just as good to draw inspiration – look at the sketch plans in the book which fit the shape of your plot, or just find a beautiful garden and transpose it onto your site. I know measuring and drawing and doing things

to scale puts a lot of people off – you don't have to do this if you don't want to, just skip the chapter, design on the ground, sitting in the garden. This is the way many of the best gardens in the world were laid out – with sticks and string in the open air.

### Golden rules

- Have fun
- Keep it simple
- Don't fill the garden's area – create spaces within it.



# The Ten Steps

## Step 1 – What do you want?

This is all about what you need from your garden. Everybody needs slightly different things – but often it revolves around prosaic things like washing lines, sitting areas, planted areas.

## Step 2 – Inspiration

Now this is where everyone is different – you might draw inspiration from a garden you've already seen, one in a picture, or even not from a garden at all. I once saw a garden inspired by an abstract painting. Inspiration can come from anywhere – clip and keep, take photographs, gather together a mood board of images.

## Step 3 – Reality

Back down to earth – what is actually outside your back door right now? What's

good, what's bad? What can be changed, what needs to stay the same? Mark these all down and bring them to the party.

## Step 4 – Base plan

This is where I might lose you. If you can't cope with tape measures and scale drawings, don't worry, just pass this chapter by ... design outside in the garden – no worries about getting the measurements right then.

## Step 5 – Design

This step is where all the information about what you need, want and have got come together, and the important message here is that you're creating rooms, spaces within the garden. Concentrate on getting those spaces looking good and the garden will take shape.





### **Step 6 – Movement**

Now you've got the perfect spaces marked out you need to work out how to move between them. How to get from the house to the garden, how to get around the garden and how to entice people to explore.

### **Step 7 – Materials**

We've got a design now – but what to make it out of? Should the main space be of grass or of gravel? Should the divisions between the rooms be plants or trellis? This is the chapter to help you decide.

### **Step 8 – Colour**

Colour comes from plants and from hard materials. How best to use colour in the garden and what effects you can get – this chapter runs through the colour basics.

### **Step 9 – Plants**

Like Chapter 4, I might lose some people here, but what I aim to do is to look at plants as a product for the garden (sacrilege to plant lovers I know). So I'll go through some of the different functions of plants and list some that fulfil each function – it really helps to demystify the whole thing and, it's just what a lot of professional designers do.

### **Step 10 – Fun bits**

And finally, this is all about decorating the rooms – choosing the perfect water feature or sculpture – shopping really.

