



Introduction

Sometimes it's really difficult to see what can be done with your own garden to improve it. Seeing it every day makes it too familiar, too entrenched in your mind to see how it might be different. There is help. There are some simple steps you can take to lift a garden, to titivate it and to transform it.



I'm not talking about huge building projects – there are lots of books out there full of intricate garden DIY jobs, packed with projects for people who know one end of a brick guillotine from the other. This is not one of those books. This is the book for people who think a G-cramp is something you get once a month. This book is for people like me, who occasionally get the urge to do something creative in the garden and want ideas, but beyond a pair of pliers and a spade we don't have a toolkit to call on or the wherewithal to use it. Basically, it's girly. Beautiful, girly projects that you can do in an afternoon and probably the most strenuous thing you'll have to do is shop.

However, these small projects, especially in a smaller garden, can make a huge difference. These little changes, which hopefully seem easy and doable one by one, will (or can) accumulate into a total transformation of your space.

There's one other thing which I've found with gardens – any effort you put in will transform it way beyond what the actual object is. Thought and time spent in the garden repays itself tenfold. You begin to see the space as yours and by adding to it, it becomes your space.

Outside rooms

It helps to think of the garden as an outside room. This attitude brings to bear all sorts of influences. Instead of being a place for gardening it becomes a canvas to decorate. You can paint the walls, put in new lighting, hang pictures, rearrange the furniture and in this way transform the space. You don't have to have a major overhaul to make a real difference.

So what I've done in this book is concentrate on the sorts of things I could do in an afternoon – or at worst in a couple of afternoons – to change a garden. No specialist DIY or gardening knowledge is needed. No special tools. These are fun things to do. My idea is that you can decide to do these on Saturday morning, maybe you'll need one trip to the DIY shop or garden centre and, after an enjoyable afternoon pottering, by evening time you can settle down with a G&T thinking 'that was a worthwhile thing to do'. There are a couple that require more planning but none which requires you to be a DIY expert.



**This book is divided into two sections
– Information and Inspiration.**

Information

The first half of the book has 10 chapters which cover 10 different ways to change your garden – from making special corners of the garden, to designing a water feature, to changing the lighting. For each approach, for each of the 10 chapters, I've included some specific projects with step by step information on how to do them.

1. Shapes

To really transform your garden, transform the spaces you live in.

2. Special areas

I think if there's one thing you can do in a garden to make it more captivating, it's putting in a den for adults and children. A space to hide away from the world and feel part of the garden.

3. Paths & steps

People often forget, in the grand garden schemes, how they will move around the space, but paths are hugely important both for practical purposes and for their visual impact.

4. Walls

In a smaller garden, walls can let the whole area down. Walls are wonderful places to exercise the quick fix – unify them and the space begins to look more defined.

5. Lighting

Putting in lighting or improving the existing lighting can make a night-time garden romantic and exciting – it's another instant transformation.

6. Colour

Paint is a fairly easy way to change the look of a garden. The right colour can regenerate a garden in a flash.

7. Theme

A theme for a garden will immediately give unity to everything you do in it and choose for it.

8. Decoration

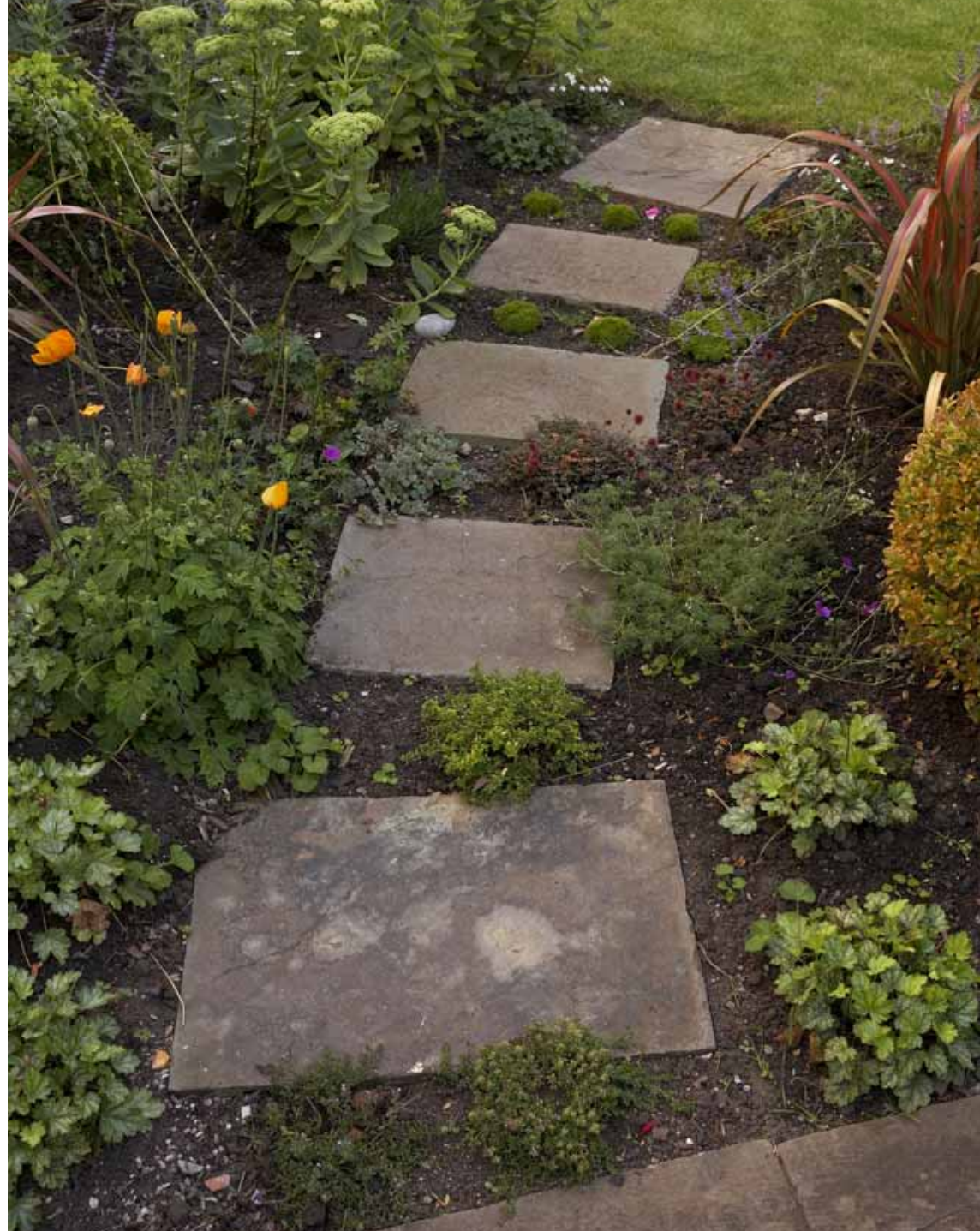
This is the really fun bit – placing decorations on the walls, putting them on the ground, hanging them in the trees. If a garden is an outside room, these are the finishing touches.

9. Water

Making a water feature yourself is probably a bit too much work, but you can design one and get it made for you ...

10. Projects for children

These are projects which children will enjoy ... but so will adults.



Inspiration

The 10 gardens in the second half of the book are pure inspiration. To help turn that inspiration into action I've put lots of captions on the pictures and a plan of the garden to point out exactly what's been done, why it's been done and why the garden works. There are also 'before' pictures of each garden which I think are really inspirational – these give real hope for any disused, neglected space.

I hope that, by doing this, it will be easier to draw inspiration from the finished gardens and each of the features and techniques used will be more apparent for you to use in your own space.



Five tips before you do anything

You don't have to do this – you can just launch straight in and start changing the garden, but it might be helpful just to stand back for a minute and work out what you really want from your garden before you start. It may help you get the spaces right, the lighting in the right place and the whole thing working together better.

- 1.** Consider the whole – even if just re-doing a little bit. How is it all going to work together?
- 2.** Look carefully at what you've got and mark down what you like and don't like about it. Try to change or disguise what you don't like and make sure you keep what you do like.
- 3.** Imagine your ideal garden, what is it about this garden that you like? Take inspiration from this, although it is probably not possible to recreate it wholesale!
- 4.** Make a scrapbook of garden images you like, so when you do start to change your own garden, the direction is clear.
- 5.** Think about how you want to use your garden – do you want it for dining, for children, for seclusion, for gardening even! Make sure that the things you are putting in are helping to achieve these needs.

