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No garden? No problem: British Garden Centres guide on how to grow big in small spaces

Research by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows that one in eight British households (12%) has no access to a private or shared garden. Yet the appetite for growing, whether it be flowers, herbs and vegetables, has never been stronger. Even if you have a small space, a balcony or a patio, you can make your garden your own. British Garden Centres has put together its top tips for small space gardening so everyone can have a piece of greenery in their lives, no matter the size of their plot.

Think vertically

If floor space is at a premium, then simply look up. Most small gardens have far more vertical space than their owners use and putting it to work will make an immediate difference. Climbers such as clematis, jasmine and runner beans will clothe a bare fence in a season, while wall-mounted planters, trellises and hanging baskets bring colour to spots that would otherwise go to waste.

Go container crazy

No ground? No problem. Almost any plant can be grown in a container if the pot is the right size and the compost is right for the job. The team at British Garden Centres suggest containers for root vegetables, and choosing drought-tolerant plants, such as lavender, sedums, and dwarf dahlias, for container spots on patios or balconies.

Choose plants that earn their space

In a small space, a plant that only performs for a few weeks isn't pulling its weight, so look for varieties with something to offer across multiple seasons: spring blossom, summer foliage, autumn berries, winter structure. Compact fruit trees, as are herbs: basil, mint, chives and thyme, which ask for very little and give back considerably more.

Maximise light

It's important to watch how light moves across your outdoor space before committing to a planting plan. Shade tolerant plants like hostas, ferns and astilbe will do perfectly well where sun loving varieties would sulk. Aesthetic is



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also important to make your space feel bigger. Pale painted walls or a well-placed mirror are ideal for small gardens as they both bounce light around and make even north facing spots feel brighter.

Use neutral tones

Colour has a powerful effect on how spacious a garden feels. Soft greys, whites and natural wood tones reflect light and keep things feeling open and uncluttered, and they let the planting do the talking rather than competing with it. These neutral backdrops also mean furniture and hard landscaping blend into the space rather than dominating it.

Zoning

It sounds counterintuitive, but breaking a small garden into zones, like a place to sit, a place to grow, a quieter corner, will make your space feel bigger, not smaller. A simple arch or trellis panel is enough to create that sense of moving from one space into another.

Soften and blur your boundaries

Hard fences and bare walls remind you exactly how small your garden is. Soften them with planting or add some wall decor, and that effect disappears. Climbers are the obvious solution in small space planting schemes, but layering ornamental grasses, shrubs and perennials at different heights works just as well, as your eye travels across the planting rather than stopping at the boundary behind it.

After dark

Most small outdoor spaces are used far less than they could be, simply because they're not lit. Good lighting, like string lights overhead, a lantern or two at ground level, and a simple uplighter on your best plant, extends the season well into the evening and transforms even a modest space into somewhere you actually want to be.

Wildlife

Small gardens can be surprisingly good for wildlife. A few well-chosen, nectar-rich plants, such as lavender, salvia, and scabious, will attract bees and butterflies throughout the summer. Holly, cotoneaster or pyracantha against a fence provides berries for birds come winter. Even a single container of wildflowers makes a difference, making your small space a haven for wildlife.



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Compost and feeding

Container plants have no access to the nutrients in the ground, so feeding matters more than many gardeners realise. A liquid feed every couple of weeks through the growing season keeps plants healthy and productive. British Garden Centres also recommends refreshing the compost in pots each spring as it makes more difference to plant performance than almost anything else.

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: “At British Garden Centres, we believe everyone deserves a space to grow. Whether you’re nurturing pots on a patio or tending a shared courtyard, there’s always room for nature to thrive close to home.”

British Garden Centres has a wide selection of spring plants, containers and furniture available at all garden centre locations and online at www.britishgardencentres.com

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About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK’s largest family-owned garden centre group with 75 centres around the country. The group is owned and led by the Stubbs family, who also own and operate Woodthorpe Leisure Park in Lincolnshire. BGC was launched in 1990 with the opening of Woodthorpe Garden Centre by brothers Charles and Robert Stubbs. Since 2018, it has expanded rapidly with the acquisition of 50 garden centres, allowing it to grow from its heartland to the business it is now, with 75 garden centres spread from Carmarthen to Ramsgate, Wimborne to East Durham. The group has a team of 3,200 colleagues working across the garden centres, restaurants, 2 growing nurseries, 4 distribution centres, Woodthorpe Leisure Park, and Woody’s Restaurant & Bar.

Social Media

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