



4th May 2026

How to grow your own cottage garden with British Garden Centres

You do not need a country estate, a lifetime of gardening experience or even a particularly big garden to grow a cottage garden. You just need a few of the right plants, a little know-how, and permission to embrace the glorious, traditional English charm that makes this garden style so loved. As part of its 'Make it Bloom' campaign, the British Garden Centres team has brought together everything you need, from plant advice, design ideas, and all the right products, so you can get started with confidence.

Plants for your cottage garden

The good news about cottage garden plants is that most of them are incredibly easy to grow. Many will self-seed, meaning they drop their own seeds and come back year after year without you having to do anything. Start with a handful of our tried and tested favourites, and you will quickly create the garden of your dreams.

At the back of a border, go for the tall flowers first. Foxgloves are a brilliant beginner plant; they are dramatic, bee-friendly and almost entirely self-sufficient once they get going. Delphiniums give you those gorgeous tall spires of blue and violet that look like statuesque at the back of your display. Hollyhocks are another easy choice, flowering reliably year after year and needing little attention.

In the middle of the border, roses are the heart of any cottage garden and quintessentially British. Varieties like Rosa 'Gertrude Jekyll' and 'The Generous Gardener' are robust, fragrant and will fill your cottage garden with scent and colour. Peonies are another great investment; they take a year or two to really get going, but once established, they come back bigger and better every season. Alliums are wonderfully easy too, just plant the bulbs in autumn, do nothing, and enjoy big purple pompom flowers the following May. Salvias are also a great choice for the cottage style and flower for months, and bees absolutely love them.

Towards the front of your cottage border, lavender is a must as it smells wonderful, it is almost impossible to kill in a sunny spot, and it is one of the best plants you can grow for pollinating insects. Hardy geraniums, the spreading, ground-covering kind, are brilliant for filling gaps and ground cover with minimal effort.



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For something to grow up a fence, wall or arch, sweet peas are the perfect cottage climber. They are fast-growing, incredibly fragrant, and the more you cut them for the house, the more flowers they produce. Clematis is another good choice, as they look beautiful scrambling through a trellis. Wisteria is slower to establish but worth every bit of patience; few plants say cottage garden as wisteria, which is spectacular when it finally gets into its stride.

Shaping your cottage garden

A cottage garden might look wonderfully unplanned, but a little structure goes a long way. A simple wooden arch or metal trellis gives your climbing plants something to grow up and instantly creates a doorway into your outdoor space. You do not need to spend a lot; even a basic arch draped with a rose or clematis can completely transform a path or boundary.

Hedging plants like privet or hornbeam are great for creating neat edges along paths or between different areas of the garden. They do not have to be high or formal; even a low clipped edge gives the border a tidy frame that makes all the cottage planting inside it look spectacular. As a bonus, hedges are fantastic for wildlife, giving birds somewhere to nest and shelter.

A birdbath is one of the simplest and most rewarding additions to any garden to give it a cottage feel. Put one in, and you will be amazed at how quickly birds find it. A small pond, even a half-barrel pond on a patio, will bring in frogs, dragonflies and all sorts of wildlife within a single season, bringing nature to life.

Finishing touches to your cottage garden

The details are what make a cottage garden feel truly special, and they are simple to do. Old terracotta pots, a weathered wooden planter, and a vintage watering can filled with trailing nasturtiums can give a garden personality and charm. If you spot an old Belfast sink or a stone trough, plant it with herbs or alpine flowers, and it will look as though it has been in the garden for decades.

Julian Palphramand, Head of Plants at British Garden Centres, said: "Nothing is more romantic than a traditional cottage garden — soft colours, sweet scents and bees drifting between the flowers. The good news is that picture-perfect chocolate box look is much easier to create than you think, and we want to help everyone give it a go."



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Visit <https://www.britishgardencentres.com/make-it-bloom/> for more information and more inspiring gardening tips.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors:

About the business:

British Garden Centres (BGC) is the UK's largest family-owned garden centre group with 79 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 79 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.

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