

Easy Steps to Dream Gardens

Garden Designs from Bloom Award-Winning Designers



The Celebrity Dream Garden

Inspired by Brendan Courtney

DESIGNER: DECLAN MCKENNA



Easy Steps to Dream Gardens

What is 'Easy Steps to Dream Gardens'?

Brought to you by Bord Bia Bloom, Easy Steps to Dream Gardens is a new initiative designed to help you plant your own show garden at home.

We have worked with eight of Bloom's award-winning show garden designers to create individual garden designs suited to every lifestyle and location.

What are the benefits of using garden designs like these?

The gardens have been designed by some of Ireland's top garden designers and landscape architects who are experts in assessing outdoor spaces and creating beautiful designs that meet the needs of garden owners.

These designs have been carefully considered to provide year-round interest and are tailored to suit various conditions. There is a solution for almost any garden, whether it sits in full-shade, dappled shade or enjoys all-day sun.

How have the gardens been designed?

The eight designs are based on a garden size of 15 metres x 9 metres. However, elements from all the designs can be adapted to suit your own outdoor space, whatever the size or location.

Each of the eight design packs in the series feature an easy-to-follow planting plan and detailed planting information. Colour-, scent- and nature-friendly, the planting plans can be implemented in your garden

The Celebrity Dream Garden

DESIGNER: DECLAN MCKENNA



Declan McKenna Declan McKenna is the in-house designer at Silverstream Landscapes in Monaghan. He studied at the College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise in Greenmount, County Antrim where he received a Foundation Degree and Higher National Diploma in Horticulture. Declan was a finalist in the Horticulturist of the Year 2012 and competed in the 2013 series of RTÉ's Super Garden. He has designed and built award-winning Show Gardens at Bord Bia Bloom in 2015, 2023 and 2024. This is his fourth garden for the festival.

This garden is designed to provide a retreat for Brendan to relax and revive and also provide space to entertain friends and family.

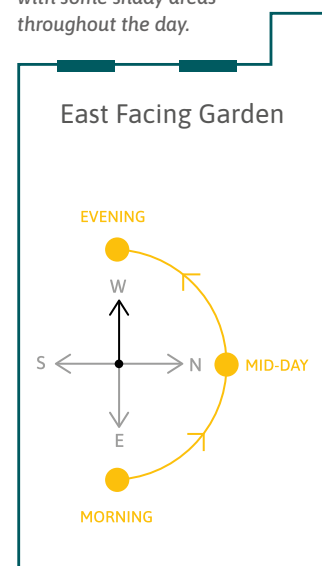
This contemporary garden is a carefully composed retreat where clean lines, texture, and function come together seamlessly. Designed by Declan McKenna in collaboration with fashion designer and television presenter, Brendan Courtney, it is inspired by Brendan Courtney's recent project to redesign his garden at home in Wicklow.

Corten steel elements introduce warmth and architectural strength while floating sandstone steps guide you gently down through the space to a sunken terrace designed for relaxation and entertaining. Designed with Brendan's active lifestyle in mind, the plunge pool offers an invigorating space to recover after swims or long runs. An outdoor shower and lounging area enhance the garden's role as a restorative environment.

Planting is layered and purposeful, blending strong structural elements such as pleached hedging, sculpted topiary balls, and elegant multi-stem trees with softer perennials and flowing grasses. Three modern statement planters anchor the view and invite exploration through this thoughtfully designed outdoor space.

Bredan Courtney Brendan Courtney is one of Ireland's best known and well-loved TV presenters, broadcasters Social Media influencer and designers. He has almost completed the renovation of his home in Wicklow, and next will complete the implementation of his dream garden.

East-facing gardens typically enjoy sun in the morning with some shady areas throughout the day.



Designer's Tips

THE CELEBRITY DREAM GARDEN -
Inspired by Brendan Courtney

Declan's advice for creating a natural garden.

When designing your outdoor space start with how you'll use the space:

Before choosing plants or furniture, think about function first. Do you want a place to relax, entertain, grow food, or let children play? from this divide the garden into "zones" for different uses, which makes the garden work for you and flow.

Limit your plant palette:

Beginners often buy too many different plants. A more professional look usually comes from repetition — using fewer varieties in larger groups. Repeating colours, textures, or shapes creates harmony and makes the garden feel intentional and considered.



Design in layers:

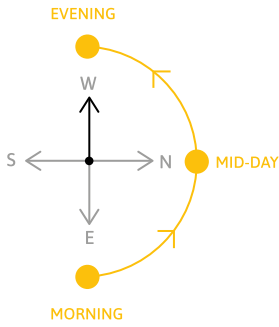
Arrange planting with height in mind: taller plants at the back, medium plants in the middle, and low-growing plants at the front. Mixing heights, textures, and flowering times adds depth and keeps the garden interesting throughout the seasons..

Think about structure all year round:

Great gardens still look attractive in winter. Include evergreen shrubs, ornamental grasses, pathways, raised beds, or focal points like feature pots to give the garden shape even when flowers are not blooming.

Garden Plan

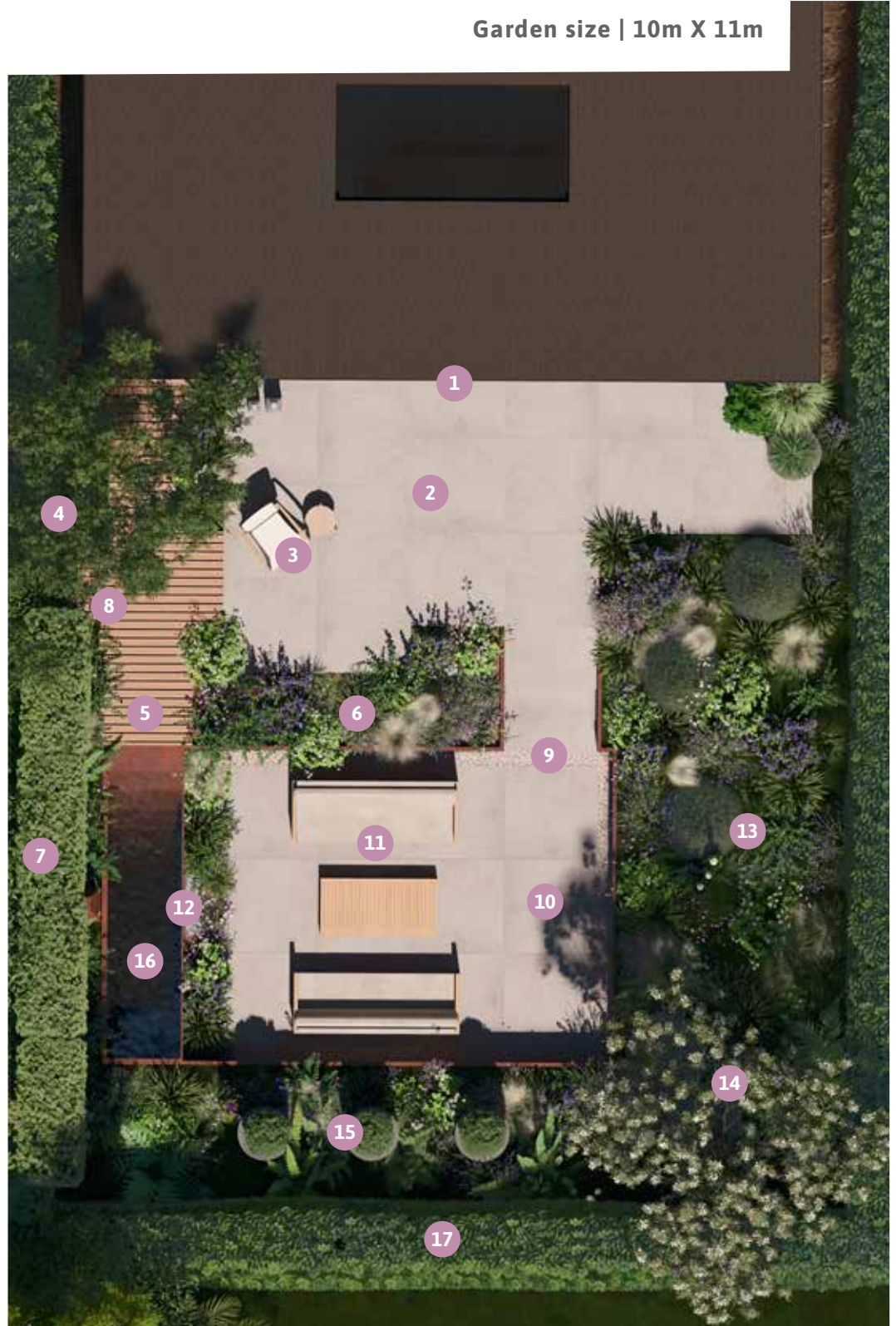
THE CELEBRITY DREAM GARDEN -
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East Facing Garden

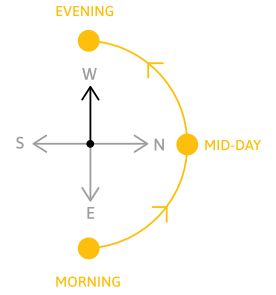
Garden size | 10m X 11m

- 1 Patio doors from house
- 2 Upper patio leading from open plan living area
- 3 Lounge Chair and side table to take in the views to the water
- 4 Screening trees to provide privacy from neighbouring houses
- 5 Decking leading to plunge pool
- 6 Planting bed with seasonal and all year round interest bridging the gap between upper and lower patios
- 7 Pleached trees provide a living privacy screen
- 8 Outdoor Shower
- 9 Steps from upper patio to lower patio
- 10 Lower Relaxation Patio
- 11 Twin outdoor sofa's and fire-pit coffee table.
- 12 Water blade fountain - utilising overflow from plunge pool
- 13 Border planted for year round interest with evergreen feature shrubs, ferns and grasses
- 14 Feature Tree providing year round interest through spring flowers, foliage in summer and autumn colour
- 15 Three large ornamental pots, planted with clipped Yew balls provide a focal point to lead the eye toward the end of the garden
- 16 Corten steel plunge pool
- 17 Evergreen climbers clothe the boundary wall, creating a sense of enclosure and sanctuary



Planting Plan

THE CELEBRITY DREAM GARDEN -
Inspired by Brendan Courtney



Garden size | 10m X 11m



Plant List

THE CELEBRITY DREAM GARDEN -
Inspired by Brendan Courtney



Plant	Pot Size	Qty
Trees		
Zelkova Serrata multi stem	40L	3
Carpinus betulus multi stem	40L	3
Carpinus betulus pleached	40L	4
Specimen Shrubs		
Taxus Baccata Balls	10L	6
Perennials		
Astrantia major Florence	2L	16
Digitalis pur. Alba	2L	16
Digitalis pur. Dalmation Purple	2L	16
Lupinus West County Hybrid Masterpiece	2L	19
Lychnis Petite Jenny	2L	15
Grasses		
Sesleria autumnalis	2L	8
Calamagrostis brachytricha	2L	38
Carex oshimensis Intense Green	2L	53
Deschampsia cespitosa Goldtau	2L	24

Plant	Pot Size	Qty
Ferns		
Polystichum munitum	2L	12
Polystichum setiferum	2L	12
Dryopteris atrata	2L	9
Dryopteris austriaca (dilatata)	2L	9
Hedge		
Prunus lusitanica	3 per metre	60

Border Feature

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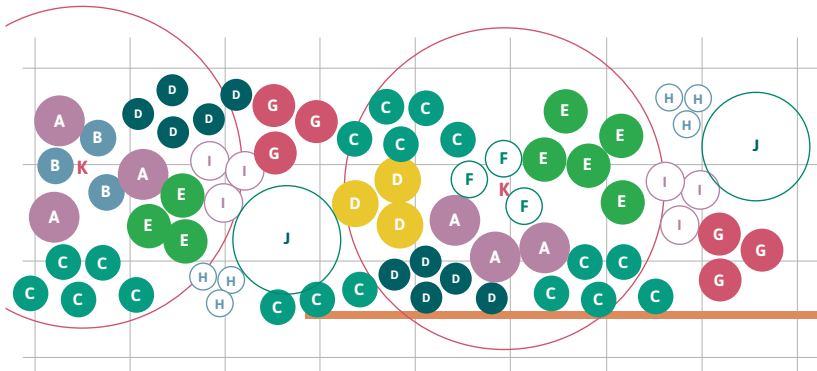
3D view of feature planting



Border Area



Planting Plan



This border has been designed for an east-facing aspect within the garden..

“Work with your garden’s conditions, not against them. Spend a few days observing sunlight, shade, wind, and drainage before buying plants. A plant that suits the location will thrive with less maintenance. For example, lavender loves sunny, dry spots, while ferns prefer cooler shade.”

The feature tree in this border is *Zelkova serrata*, a tree which has a long season of interest with small spring flowers, bright green leaves which turn golden in autumn, and it can be pruned to if planted in a very small garden.

Two clipped Yew balls provide punctuation marks at each end of the border, while year-round colour is provided by a selection of ferns and grasses. Pops of colour from purple *Digitalis* (Foxglove), *Astrantia major Florence*® and frothy *Lychnis Petite Jenny*, demonstrating how repeating colours, textures, or shapes creates harmony, making the garden feel intentional and considered.

You will find the full list of plants in the **planting plan**.

Border Plant List

A	<i>Digitalis pur.</i> Dalmation Purple
B	<i>Polystichum munitum</i>
C	<i>Carex oshimensis</i> Intense Green
D	<i>Sesleria autumnalis</i>
E	<i>Calamagrostis brachytricha</i>
F	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
G	<i>Astrantia major</i> Florence
H	<i>Lupinus West County</i> Hybrid Masterpiece
I	<i>Lychnis Petite Jenny</i>
J	<i>Taxus Baccata</i> Balls
K	<i>Zelkova Serrata</i> multi stem

Easy Steps to Dream Gardens



The Coastal Garden
by James Purdy



The Entertainers' Garden
by Linda McKeown



The Easy Care Garden
by Oliver Schurmann



The Shared Spaces Family Garden
by Nicola Haines



The Family Friendly Garden
by Maeve O'Neill



The Plant Lovers Garden
by Patricia Tyrrell



The Nature Enthusiast's Garden
by Jane McCorkell

To view the other 7
Dream Garden Designs visit

bordbiabloom.com/dreamgardens

Common Questions

What is a planting plan?

A planting plan is a comprehensive guide which shows you what plants to plant in your garden and where to plant them in order to achieve a successful planting scheme. All seven planting plans featured in this series are easy-to-follow and can be adapted to suit your garden size and aspect.

Can I still use the plans if I don't have a 15m x 9m garden?

Yes, for each design we have focused on a specific border which can be implemented in your own garden, regardless of size. The plans include a grid in each downloadable pack which can be repeated to suit the size of your border. Staff in your local garden centre will be able to offer further advice if required.

I only have a balcony or a window box. Can I still take part?

Yes, many of the plants featured in this series are suitable for container gardening (e.g. window boxes, hanging baskets and planters). Here are some useful tips to help you get started.

Where can I buy the plants?

The designers have chosen plants that are grown in Ireland and are readily available in garden retailers around the country. All the plants are available to purchase throughout the year, while bulbs can be purchased in the autumn.

How much do the designs cost to implement in my own garden?

The cost depends on a variety of factors, including the condition of and access to your garden and whether you want to invest in hard landscaping features. The focus borders in this series are a great way to liven up your garden on a budget. Many of the perennial and annual plants featured are very affordable and can help you add colour and interest without a significant outlay.

Is the aspect of my garden important when choosing a garden design?

Aspect is the direction a garden faces – north, south east or west - and determines how much sun or shade a space receives. Each of the garden designs has been designed for a specific aspect, so before choosing a design, find out the aspect of your own garden here – [link here](#)

The direction your garden faces will determine how much sun it will get throughout the day. For example, an east-facing garden will get good morning sun.. A south-facing garden will get sun for most of the day in summer, while gardens that face west will get sun from late morning/

early afternoon through to the evening. North-facing gardens tend to be shady and a little cooler. However, they may have sun to the rear of the garden which may be the best location for a seating area.

What other factors I should consider when choosing which garden design to plant in my own garden?

Good garden design starts with research and planning. Once you have found out your garden's aspect, the first step is to survey your existing garden. Your local garden centre is the best place to get expert advice on the following considerations:

- **Your location** – is your garden in an exposed coastal or upland location or a less exposed, sheltered location?
- **Your soil** – understanding the soil in your garden will inform what plants will work best for your plot. Soil textures vary from heavy clay to sand, while the ph. of your soil can vary from acid to alkaline. Once you understand the soil in your garden you can determine what you might need to do to improve it. The condition can be enhanced by adding soil conditioners such as farmyard manure or compost.
- **Changing levels** – is your garden flat or does it slope towards/away from the house? Is water runoff an issue? Do you need steps or terracing? This will help you plan any hard landscaping features. You should seek professional advice if you have drainage issues or notable level changes.
- **Adjoining properties** – what impact, if any, do adjoining properties have on your garden? Do neighbouring buildings or trees cast shade on your space? Do you need to add planting or structures to provide privacy in your garden?
- **Usage** – do you have small children or pets that are likely to try eating your plants? Look for plants with low/no toxicity. Your local garden centre will be able to offer further advice on this.
- **Measurements** – finally, measure your garden and plot it out on paper. Using graph paper will make it easier to plot your dimensions. Alternatively, you can print out the grid sheet we have provided at the back of this downloadable garden packs.

Once you have surveyed your garden and assessed your needs you can select the Dream Garden Plan that works best for you.

Common Questions

When should I start planting?

Pot/container-grown trees and shrubs can be planted year-round when the ground and weather conditions are favourable. It's important to remember to water trees regularly during the drier months until the tree is established, which is typically after two years.

Bareroot hedges are planted during the dormant season, which runs from November until early March. Plant these when the ground and weather conditions are favourable. As with trees, remember to water a new hedge during spells of dry weather.

Spring and summer bulbs such as Daffodils (Narcissus), Crocus, Tulips and Alliums are planted the previous autumn.

What is hard landscaping?

Hard landscaping is a term to describe the hard elements in your garden such as stone, concrete, and gravel. It generally refers to paths, patios and other built structures such as pergolas and water features.

If you are skilled at DIY you may be able to undertake some elements of the design yourself and there are plenty of resources available in online blogs and YouTube to

help you do this. However, if you are considering adding complex hard landscaping features to your garden then you may be better served hiring a professional. Hard landscaping is a long-term investment and should last throughout the lifespan of your garden so it is important to get it right from the outset.

What basic skills do I need?

Check out www.bordbia.ie to get advice and tips that can help you hone your gardening skills.

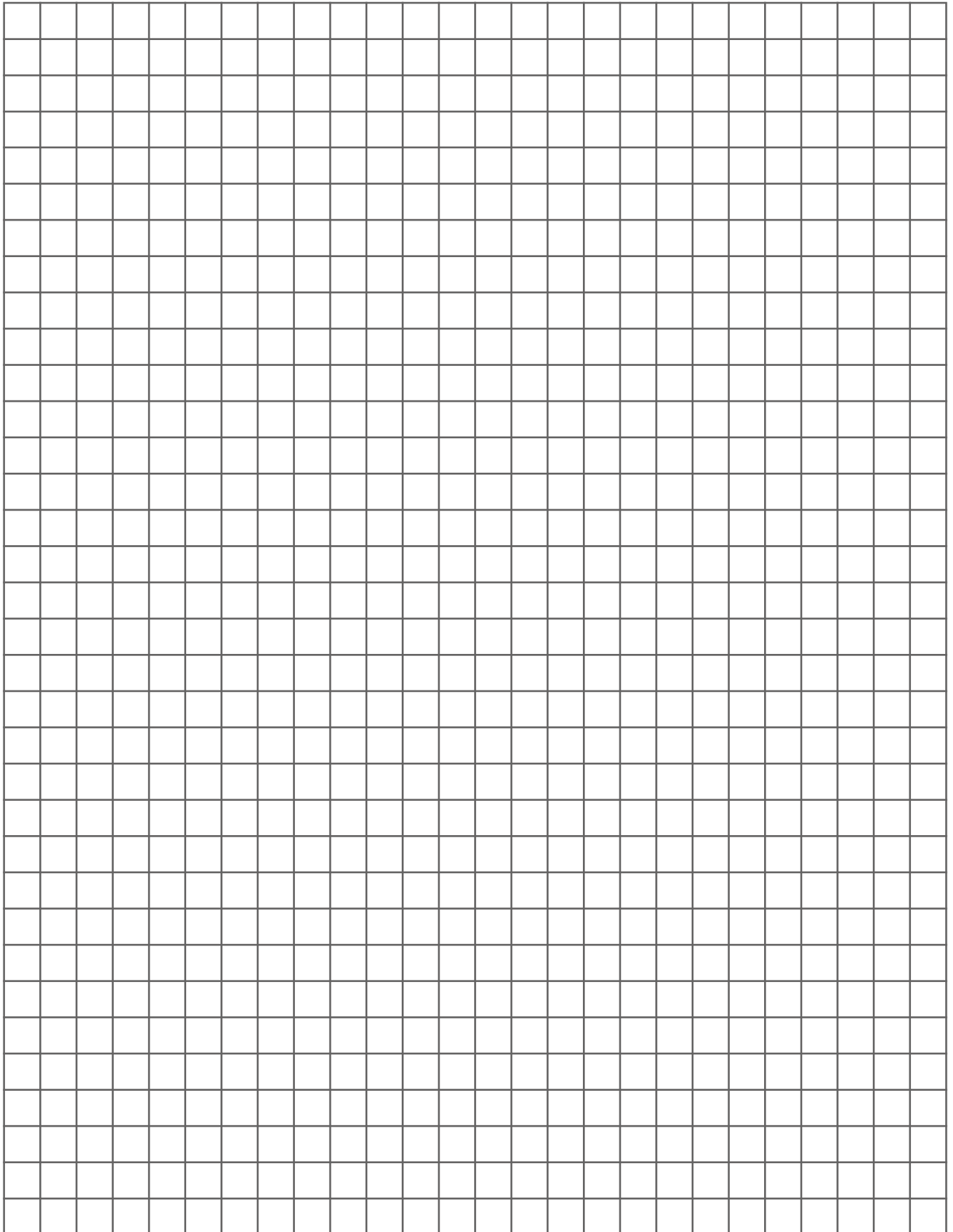
What equipment and products do I need?

These 8 gardening essential tools and products will help you get started:

- Measuring tape
- Spade
- Fork
- Hand trowel
- Hand fork
- Rake
- Secateurs
- Compost

Glossary

- **Evergreen:** An evergreen plant keeps its leaves all year.
- **Deciduous:** A deciduous plant sheds its foliage in winter and produces new leaves in spring.
- **Trees:** Trees are typically large, evergreen or deciduous plants that have a single trunk, although they can be trained into a multi-stem (see below). If your garden is small opt for a species that suits your space, such as an Acer or Amelanchier lamarckii. Your local garden centre will be able to help you choose the best option for your space.
- **Shrubs:** Shrubs are evergreen or deciduous woody plants with several main stems near the ground. Smaller than a tree, they help add form and structure to your garden.
- **Perennials:** Perennials are plants that die back to the ground in the winter and re-emerge the following year.
- **Biennials:** Biennials are plant that live for two years. They typically produce foliage in the first year and flowers the following year. Like perennials, they die back to the ground in the winter and re-emerge the following year.
- **Annuals:** Annuals are plants that live for a year or less. These are great options if you wish to add colour to your garden on a tight budget.
- **Climbers:** Climbers are deciduous and evergreen climbing plants that can be trained to climb up trellises, fences or walls.
- **Bulbs:** Bulbs, such as Daffodils or Tulips, provide seasonal colour. They are planted in the autumn and flower throughout the spring.
- **Topiary:** Topiary is the art or practice of clipping shrubs or trees into ornamental shapes.
- **Multi-stem:** A multi-stem tree is a tree that has two or more stems. These have been trained to grow together by planting two or more single-stemmed trees in one hole or pot.
- **Coppice:** To coppice means to cut a tree or shrub back to ground level periodically to stimulate growth.
- **Espalier:** An espalier is a fruit tree or ornamental shrub whose branches are trained to grow flat against a wall, supported on a lattice.
- **Pleached:** A pleached tree or shrub features branches that are entwined or interlaced to form a hedge or provide cover for an outdoor walkway.





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