

Q & A

GOT A QUESTION? We've got the answer, whether it's about a plant, a tricky spot or a product you need

Q **MY WEIGELA SHRUB** is five years old and although it looks healthy has never had any flowers. Why is that?
Jane Dobney, via email

If you're cutting back your weigela in the second half of summer, you're inadvertently cutting off most of the next season's flower buds. The best time to trim it is in late June, which is straight after it normally finishes flowering. Then let the stems grow for the rest of the summer and the following year you'll have an amazing flower show to sit back and enjoy.



Q **DO I NEED TO WATER EVERYTHING** in the garden all year round?
Jenni Harrington, Manchester

In their first year after being planted, new plants will need regular watering. Give them a full can of water every week throughout summer. All your pot plants will

need the same. Established plants, a year old or more, will be fine with just rainwater, as long as they are planted in the ground. But if the weather is hot and dry for a couple of weeks in a row, start watering them weekly again, until the rain returns. Plants in containers will need watering daily with half a can of water in hot weather. Do so at the start or end of the day.



WORDS: MELISSA MABBITT, LYNNE MAXWELL



An old pallet makes a quirky wall planter stuffed with leafy plants.

Q **THE STONE WALL NEXT TO MY HOUSE** would make a great feature. I've seen green walls on Instagram. How can I create one myself?
Karen Jones, Chester

If it's a dry stone wall, or an old wall with lots of crevices, you can plant tiny succulents such as sedums and houseleeks, creeping campanula or mossy saxifrage, straight into the wall. Wrap their roots in strips of jute hanging basket liner (available from most garden centres) along with a spoonful of compost, and poke them into the holes. The jute will act as a spongy plug, keeping them in place. Water every other day for the first few weeks as they take root. If your wall is flat, attach wall planters such as those from waitrosegarden.com and fill with plants like million bells, creeping Jenny, African daisies, trailing nepeta and heuchera.

Q **MY POND IS FULL OF GREEN STUFF.** What can I do to get rid of it?
Tom Robinson, via email

It sounds like green algae, a common problem in ponds and water features that get a lot of sun. You'll notice it's normally worse when the weather has been sunny. If the green algae is floating in the water in hair-like strands (known as blanket weed) use a stick to lift it out.

Plenty of water treatments, such as Nishikoi Goodbye Green Water (swelluk.com) are available from garden centres and aquatics retailers. Dyofix Pond Black (dyofix.co.uk) is a safe additive that turns the water black, starving the algae of light. It's great for making contemporary style water features look sleek and won't affect fish, or plants with flowers or leaves above water.

For a natural alternative try adding a small bunch of barley straw to the water. It's available from gardenstoreonline.co.uk.

EASY IDEAS



WHAT CAN I DO TO GREEN-UP my patchy lawn? I need a product that's safe for pets.

Allie Newcastle, via email

If your lawn goes brown in dry weather, try cutting it with your mower blades on a higher setting, which helps the grass stay green for longer. Little and often (once a week) is better than scalping it.

A summer lawn feed such as Evergreen Extreme Green Lawn Feed (£6 for 2.8kg, diy.com) is safe for pets and will also help make the grass greener.

If your lawn has distinct bare spots, try Westland Safe Lawn. It's an organic fertiliser with added lawn seed that helps fill in the thinning patches and is also pet friendly. It costs £11.99 for enough to cover an area 150m² wickes.co.uk



MY NEW GARDEN IS A BLANK CANVAS. It's north facing and 10m long. I'd like an outdoor room with a patio where we can eat, but don't know where to start.

Aimee Tuohy, Cardiff

Start with the fun and inspiring bit! Decide on your look, using *Modern Gardens* as your starting point. Decide your colour palette and the materials you want to use, just as you would for a room indoors.

The patio area for a table and chairs is the most important thing for you. Look to see what part of your garden gets the most light in the afternoon and evening, when you're most likely to be eating outdoors. In a north-facing garden this will be the point furthest from the house. Leave a gap all the way around the patio when it's installed to allow for plants to soften the edges.

PHOTOS: ALAMY, SHUTTERSTOCK

Paint and timber screening transform walls into features.



ASK THE DESIGNER

OUR GARDEN IS SURROUNDED BY WALLS

How can we soften the look?
Jenna McPherson, Peebles



Walls on three sides of the garden looked bland and boring.



CHRIS RIXTON
GreenBird Gardening

"My clients wanted to transform large expanses of brick wall, a common problem with new builds, and add some vibrancy to their garden. One solution is to paint them. They wanted a modern urban look so we chose Ronseal 'Juicy Berry' and 'Lime Zest'. Clearing a jungle of passion flower revealed another huge area of brick

which could be seen from the road so we went for a dark grey bespoke B&Q Valspar paint colour which worked well with our palette. For such a large area it's important to get the colour right, just as you would for a feature wall in your home. The white bark of three Himalayan birch trees contrasts beautifully with the dark grey, and uplighters highlight them at night.

"We also disguised part of the wall with a screen and used another on the other side of the patio to hide the exit and entry point into the garden from the garage, while still allowing light in."

Jenna's question was answered by Chris Rixton who is founding director of a landscaping and design company based in the South West greenbirdgardening.co.uk.

CONTACT www.moderngardensmagazine.co.uk

Want some design inspiration or have you got a garden question you'd like answered? Get in touch, including a picture if you have one, by email at moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk