

Transform

4 a small city plot into an outdoor room
ways to create an outdoor room

1 Decking
Lay outdoor flooring



2 Containers
Plant up pretty pots



3 Colour
Stain wooden fencing



4 Accessories
Finish with funky extras





Ann-Marie Powell, presenter of Channel 4's *Real Gardens*, has

turned her tiny garden into a gorgeous outdoor living space. Fun features mix with vibrant colour, while plants in pots mean the heart of the garden can move with her

Top tip

'If you want to create a garden where friends and family can really sit back and relax, don't fuss too much over keeping it neat and tidy.'

outdoor room

When TV presenter Ann-Marie Powell was designing her small garden in north London, she knew that she wanted to create a comfortable space for relaxing and entertaining. 'Not many of my friends have gardens,' she explains, 'so mine attracts them like bees round a honey pot!'

With hard landscaping the subject of her next book, Ann-Marie has put some of her ideas

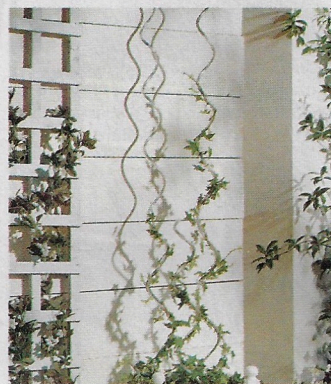
into practice in her backyard. She has laid a square of decking tiles to create a comfortable seating area, and replaced a long, straight concrete path with a snaky brick one.

'It was back-breaking work, but definitely worth it,' she says. 'Straight paths lead the eye right to the end of the garden, without taking in some of the best features on the way.'

Ann-Marie chose many plants

with an eye to the future. 'In a way, I'm treating this as a nursery garden, to bring on plants for my next one, which I hope will be a bit bigger.

'It's nice to know that I will have clumps of things such as lime-green spurge, double maroon hollyhocks, purple verbenas – a very fashionable plant at the moment – and pineapple sage, to start off my next garden venture,' she smiles.



Adding structure

► 'I like vertical features that give a garden instant height. Even a row of bamboo stakes or copper poles makes a decorative screen. The small pots on top of the poles are for the safety of neighbouring cats, which tend to jump off the shed roof!'

▼ 'These swirly alloy plant supports look great covered in ivy, but can also be used without plants as focal points in their own right.' These plant spirals cost from £14.99 for three, by McCord.

SAFETY TIP
Poles are best left out of gardens if you have children



▲ Lakeland Limited has sets of six 13cm-diameter, terracotta-like pots in Artstone, £5.95, which would look good positioned on high.



Choosing containers

▼ 'Add instant vibrancy to your garden with the most colourful ceramic pots you can find. Make sure they are frostproof though.'



◀ 'At the centre of my herb wheel is a bay tree, surrounded by unruly plants. I like to cultivate the formal and informal side by side.'

▼ 'I have planted this flat container with houseleeks and roseroot, both hardy succulents that will flower year after year.'



Transform a small city plot into an outdoor room

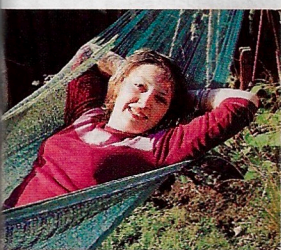


Fab furniture

◀ 'There's nothing I like better than to relax in a contoured chair. Treat the wood with a preservative and you can leave it outside all year round.' This slatted bamboo deckchair is £49.95, from The Cotswold Company.

▶ The Garden Factory's steamer chair costs £150.

◀ 'Hammocks are really practical in a small garden. You can grow things underneath them, so they don't take up any actual garden space at all. I like to plant lavender and other herbs, so the scents drift up while I'm daydreaming!'



▲ The cotton Lazy-days Hammock is big enough for two, and comes with a variety of support systems. It costs from £49.95, by The Garden Factory.



Top tip

Ann-Marie has used decking tiles to create an attractive seating area. 'You can lay them over cracked concrete, which saves lots of hard work,' she says. The Cotswold Company sells 49.5cm sq pressure-treated pine decking tiles, in packs of 12, for £69.95.



How to make a herb wheel

- Decide on the size.
- Level the ground and stamp it down flat.
- Tie a stick to each end of a piece of string. The length will define the circle's radius.
- Push one stick firmly into

the centre and draw a circle in the soil with the other.

- Outline the circle with a piece of hosepipe or rope, and divide it into segments.
- Lay bricks to form the outline and divisions.

- Dig in compost, and plant easy-care herbs such as chives, thyme, sage and marjoram.
- Sprinkle pea gravel (available from garden centres) to cover the soil and discourage weeds.

5 easy-to-grow flowers

Ann-Marie calls these her indestructibles



'Cotton lavender has feathery foliage all year and yellow 'button' flowers in summer.'



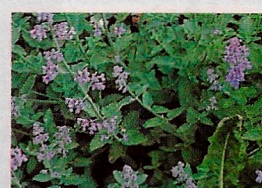
'The rich brown centres of helenium last long after the orange petals have dropped.'



'I hang up bunches of lavender to dry indoors, then rub off the flowers to put in pot pourri.'



'The umbrellalike flowers of achillea will add a splash of colour to your plot.'



'Catmint, with its long stems of lavender-like flowers, is loved by both cats and people.'