

THE ESQUIRE GUIDE TO THE GARDEN

Want to make more of that space outside the backdoor? Here's how

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY LEE POWERS

1/ URBAN

CITY SLICKER

Urban garden design is undergoing something of a revolution

Makeover programmes first alerted us to the untapped potential of our gardens but, says award-winning designer Stephen Woodhams, "That bubble has burst." Moneyed urbanites are increasingly treating their gardens as exterior rooms rather than a space for quick-fix solutions: "People understand they have to pay more to increase the value of their property, and are now saying, 'OK, the garden is a good investment too.'"

Woodhams' design for one London mews house, *pictured*, epitomises this changing attitude. "It's a pure extension of the first floor," he says. "The decking edge detail, for instance, is to make the seating look like it's on a rug." Flora is minimal: bamboo screening, fig trees and troughs of box are used as much for structure as for greenery. The owners' main concern was "clean

lines and maximising the feeling of space". Once described as the *enfant terrible* of the Chelsea Flower Show, Woodhams' own garden is more classical. "Everything else is about instant gratification," he says. "The joy of the garden is watching it grow. Or, in some instances, watching it fail and having to rethink your ideas."

Enquiries: 020 7730 3353;
www.woodhams.co.uk

Stephen's design tips Waterproof fabrics

"Sutherland Outdoor furniture can be left out all year round."

Big pots "A plant needs more soil than you realise."

Hot tubs "Gardens should be sensual places."

How to...

BE A GUERRILLA GARDENER

From railway embankments to roundabouts, disused and neglected urban sites are being targeted with a unique form of vandalism, "guerrilla gardeners" are planting flowers, vegetable plots, herb gardens and foliage. Former ad executive Richard Reynolds, the UK's most notorious exponent, offers his tips on how to get involved.

1/ GET THE RIGHT CLOBBER

Wellington shoes defend against the mud and blend in with other city-goers. "I've even worn these clubbing," says Reynolds.



2/ KNOW YOUR ONIONS

"We planted some primulas at a roadside and they were badly damaged by road grit. Coastal vegetation would stand up better to those conditions."

3/ GO UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS

Guerrilla gardening is technically vandalism. "So far I haven't got into trouble," says Reynolds. "Actually, the main reason we go at night is that's when we've all finished work."

4/ BRING A LADY FRIEND

"A brilliant diversion if the police drop by."

5/ EVERY LITTLE HELPS

No time to plough? Then scatter. "Some people get involved just by throwing seeds out of their car windows," says Reynolds. Enquiries: www.guerrillagardening.org