

Horsham Society

with Julie Dumbrell



Greening your front garden

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) is running a campaign called 'Greening Grey Britain' and is asking for a 'Pledge to plant' thereby transforming 6,000 grey spaces.

No-one really wants to see front gardens disappearing under a sea of paving. However in these days of too many cars and too few places to park them, it is sadly becoming more and more necessary to pave the front garden in order to find a place to park

Because of this, time is well spent in giving thought and attention to the design in order to create a pleasing as well as functional space. Before starting, it's as well to read the current legislation regarding paving and noting the requirement to apply for planning permission for 'dropping the kerb'.

The advantages of careful planning mean that you can end up with a functional space which is also less harmful to the environment, reasonably easy to maintain and pleasing to the eye.

Start by looking at the space available, considering at the same time where to



park and where planting can be included. In the overall design, consider what colour paving or surface material to choose - taking into account the colour of the brick, or finish or age of the property. Think about varying the type of paving or the way in which it can be laid and if appropriate, adding curves or texture for interest.

So, planting - what to choose? Ideally (unless you're a very keen gardener or have time to spare) planting arrangements chosen for the front garden are best kept fairly simple. 'Low maintenance' shrubs or perennials or seasonal planting arrangements work best. Remember not to plant near the edge of the property where, when the plant grows, sight lines will be impeded. Make sure that plants do not overgrow and become a nuisance to pavement users.

Don't forget the option to use 'vertical space' for extra planting. This also has the effect of 'taking the eye up' and away from vehicles parked in the drive. Using bare walls and fencing is ideal for adding interest and greening to a front garden. This can be achieved simply with climbing plants - securing trellis or wire for plants to grow up or by attaching 'pocket planters'.

Put big pots where you want them before filling with compost - ensuring good drainage by using crocks and pot feet. If there is limited space, hanging baskets or containers look good. Adding slow release fertilizer and moisture

retaining granules to the compost will reduce a bit of maintenance time.

So, what to do if the front garden is already paved? In this situation it may be possible to remove individual slabs and then use this space to add some plants. For safety use protective eyewear before starting, ease out the slab and dig out whatever is underneath. When soil or a reasonable depth is reached, add some fresh compost then plant accordingly.

Colour has been proved to have an impact on mood and gardens are known to promote health and happiness and lift the spirits. Planting attracts bees and other pollinating insects and makes a small contribution towards improving air quality, particularly when fragrant plants are chosen.

The Horsham Society is concerned about the past, present and future of the town. It seeks to promote good planning and design for the built environment and open spaces.

Membership of the Horsham Society is open to anyone who shares these concerns.

For more information, visit the website www.horshamsociety.org or phone 01403 259038.