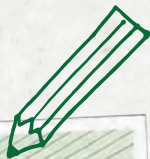


FRONT GARDEN GUIDE



THE RHS WANTS TO BRING BACK COLOUR AND LIFE TO STREETSCAPES BY REVERSING THE GROWING TREND OF PAVING OVER FRONT GARDENS.



Not only do gardens improve our mood, but there is also evidence that horticulture can form part of the solution towards major health and wellbeing issues. The decline of the front garden aggravates environmental challenges, including flooding and reduced habitat for pollinators such as bumblebees and butterflies.

Front gardens help us and the environment, reducing pollution levels, mitigating against flooding, and providing opportunities for neighbours and communities to come together and improve the streets we live in.

This guide will show you how easy it can be to make a grey front garden green. It includes a list of low-maintenance plants and ways to accommodate both parking and plants.

Together we can enrich everyone's lives through plants, and make the UK a greener and more beautiful place...



RHS

Greening
Grey Britain



Sharing the best in Gardening

GARDEN #1

Small front garden with no parking



The Brief



Where space is tight there is limited opportunity for environmental benefits, so every inch counts. Greening tiny plots creates an attractive space that will benefit owners, wildlife and passers-by. Bin storage is essential, but the rest of the garden is available for planting.

Solutions

North-facing, shaded plots suit leafy evergreen shrubs.

Well-chosen shrubs have colourful flowers and berries that look great and benefit wildlife and their varied shiny leaves reflect light.

Even quite small plants quickly fill this space. After watering in the first summer, they require very little attention afterwards.

Half an hour every week to brush the path and tidy up with occasional trimming will keep this mini oasis pleasant.

Scaling up or down

Smaller gardens:

Fewer shrubs can be used according to space.

Larger gardens:

Bigger, taller, or more, shrubs will improve environmental benefit as will hedges in place of fences. Less attractive masonry could be clad with climbers.

Planting

These low-maintenance plants will work well in a garden like this:

Fatsia japonica AGM, PFP

Evergreen shrub to 1.8m (6ft) height and spread readily pruned in spring, huge hand like leaves and black fruits in winter.

Sarcococca confusa AGM, PFP

Shrub to 1.5m (5ft) height and spread, with scented winter flowers, glossy evergreen leaves and red-black berries from summer to winter.

Hedera helix 'Buttercup' AGM, PFP

Ivies can be colourful. This climber has yellow leaves and adds colour when climbing up to 2.5m (8ft).

Skimmia japonica subsp. *Reevesiana* PFP

Evergreen shrub setting red berries after small fragrant flowers valued by pollinators. 1.5m (5ft). Height and spread.

Juniperus scopulorum 'Skyrocket'

Narrow conifer taking up little space but adding height.

Viburnum davidii AGM

Evergreen shrub with corrugated deep green leaves, creamy flowers and blue berries to 1.5m (5ft).

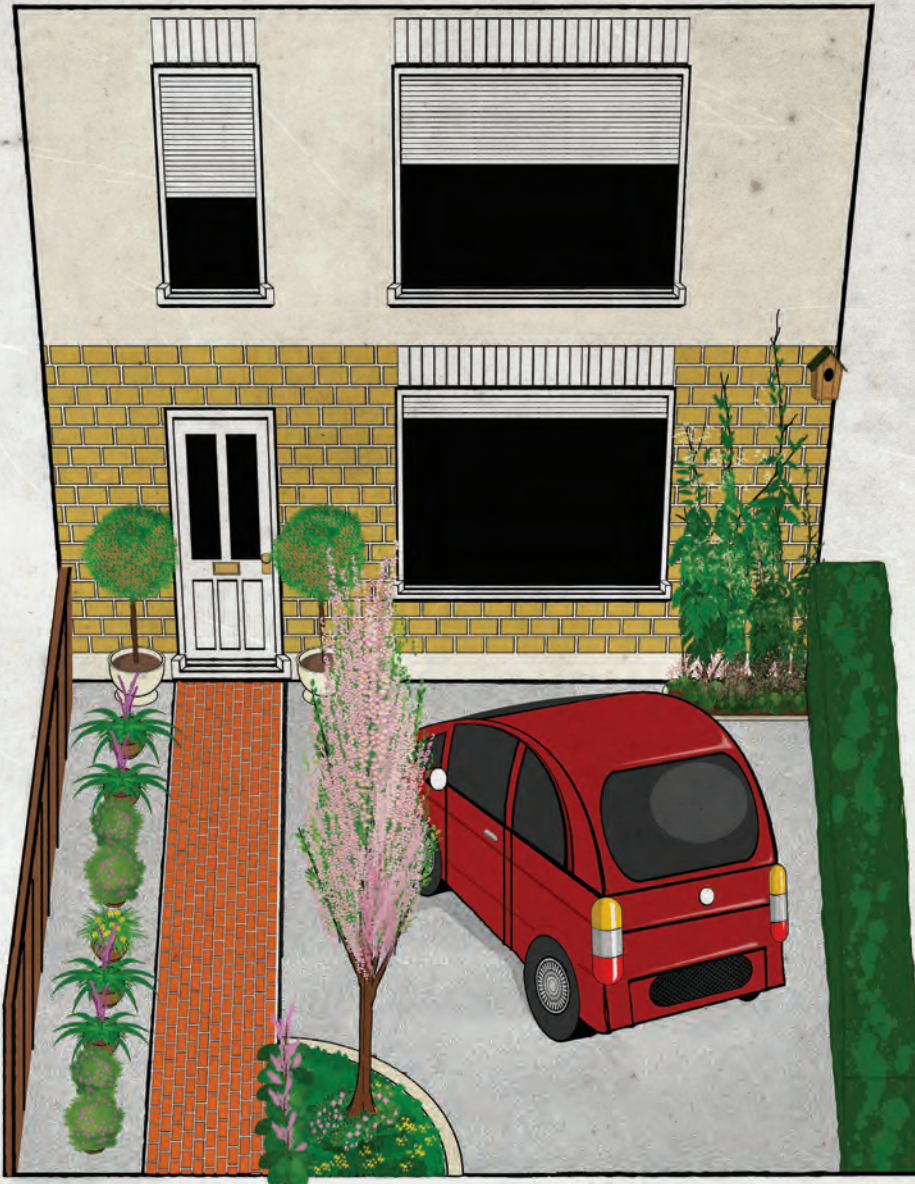
Allium schoenoprasum PFP

Chives – even a little shaded plot can provide something for the kitchen. Summer blue flowers above 15-20cm (6-8ins) savoury leaves.



GARDEN #2

Small garden with space for one car



The Brief



Smaller houses and gardens are often linked to insufficient on-street parking, but parking, gravel and greenery combine well to absorb rainwater. Plants, especially trees, filter pollutants, give shelter, support wildlife and please the eye.

Solutions

A small deciduous upright tree that won't affect parking or paths is especially environmentally beneficial. Colourful dwarf narcissi and hardy cyclamen thrive beneath trees. The hedge provides a winter wildlife refuge.

Gardens facing north are sufficiently shaded to need less watering. Potted plants, the shrubs framing the door here, therefore are relatively low maintenance, especially if self-watering containers are used.

Gardeners in a hurry may buy larger specimen plants to counter the slower growth in shade.

The climber will partially insulate the walls as well as sustaining wildlife.

Except for the pots no water is needed once plants are established.

A privet hedge as suggested here will need trimming twice a year. Otherwise less than an hour a week will keep this garden neat and gravel raked all year.

Scaling up or down

Smaller gardens:

Substituting a large shrub and a climber-clad fence for the tree and hedge would still provide much benefit.

Larger gardens:

A bigger tree or another hedge would double wildlife and dust capture.

Planting

These low-maintenance plants will work well in a garden like this:

Malus 'Adirondack' AGM

Narrow crab apple only 3m (9ft) across and up to 8m (25ft) high.

Hydrangea anomala subsp. petiolaris AGM, PFP

Self-clinging climber up to 10m (30ft), slow growing, and deciduous basket like growth.

Prunus lusitanica AGM

Portugal laurel, evergreen tree that can be clipped and potted to make a neat and trouble-free 'lollipop' mini-tree to frame doorway.

Ligustrum ovalifolium AGM

Green privet is evergreen in all but cold winters and makes a good hedge up to 1.8m (6ft). The yellow form is better if making a new hedge.

Epimedium pinnatum subsp. colchicum AGM

Barrenwort forms mats of low evergreen foliage with delicate spring flowers.

Narcissus 'Tête-à-tête' AGM

Dwarf (15cm/6ins) daffodil that grows readily and is inexpensive to buy.

Cyclamen hederifolium AGM

Autumn flowering hardy cyclamen followed by mat of ivy-like leaves.

Muscari armeniacum AGM, PFP

Grape hyacinths grow easily, are inexpensive, highly resilient and their (15cm/6ins) cones of blue flowers support insects.



GARDEN #3

Larger garden with space for two cars



The Brief



Cars and vegetation can easily co-exist in larger front gardens but green benefits can be maximised by focussing on the most beneficial and cost effective aspects: porous surfaces, a tree, hedges, wall shrubs and climbers and varied vegetation.

Solutions

East facing gardens are cold and windy but trees and hedges slow breezes, reduce chill and filter pollutants and noise.

Potted plants will need regular watering ideally from the water butt in the corner. When planted in the ground established plants will seldom require watering. Despite slight shade on an east-facing wall most wall shrubs and climbers will thrive.

Porous path pavers and gravelled car parking absorb rainwater while their pale colour reflects light. Planting perennials, spring and autumn bulbs along the path provides prolonged colour, and also shelter and food sources for a variety of wildlife.

No watering is needed for these plants once they have established nor are stakes or supports required.

About two hours a week will keep this garden smart in summer, less in winter.

Scaling up or down

Smaller gardens:

Replacing the tree with a large shrub and omitting the low plants along the hedge would retain much of the environmental benefit

Larger gardens:

To best enhance environmental benefits plant more trees and grow higher hedges, within reason (1.8/6ft).

Planting

These low-maintenance plants will work well in a garden like this:

***Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia'** AGM
Deciduous hawthorn 8m (25ft) after 20 years. White flowers, red fruits and autumn colour.

***Wisteria sinensis* 'Amethyst'** AGM
Spring flowering climber up to 12m (40ft) with violet flowers.

***Clematis* 'Niobe'** AGM
Compact climber to 2.5m (8ft) with deep red flowers followed by feathery seedheads.

Carpinus betulus AGM
Deciduous hornbeam trees makes a good hedge retaining dead leaves over winter.

Osmanthus* × *burkwoodii AGM
Slow growing evergreen hedge to 1.5m high carrying fragrant little white spring flowers.

***Carex oshimensis* 'Evergold'** AGM
Yellow striped evergreen sedge in 30cm (12ins) high clumps.

***Ajuga reptans* 'Catlin's Giant'** AGM, PFP
Bugle. Blue spring and summer flowers (30cm/12ins) from a mat of matted glossy purple tinged leaves.

Saxifraga* × *urbium AGM
London pride is an evergreen groundcover perennial 30cm (12ins) high with white summer flowers and scalloped foliage.

***Geranium* 'Dilys'** AGM, PFP
Mat forming hardy geranium 30cm (12ins) high with summer magenta flowers.



TOP TIPS

FRONT GARDEN TIPS FOR NEW HOMES:

1. Check with your Council planning office first
www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200130/common_projects/45/paving_your_front_garden
2. See what grows well in other gardens nearby.
3. Check your soil using the RHS online guidance
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=179
4. Use RHS guide to assess shade
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=934
5. Improve soil before planting
www.rhs.org.uk/Advice/profile?pid=237
6. Consider porous paving options
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?pid=738
7. Remember that trees have the most benefit – Consider RHS guide to small trees
www.rhs.org.uk/advice/profile?PID=117
8. Have plumbers and electricians fit power and water connections while they are doing other work in your new home
9. Protect the soil with sheets of outdoor plywood or other materials if having building work done
10. Join the RHS and access RHS Garden Advice Service
www.rhs.org.uk/membership/rhs-gardening-advice

