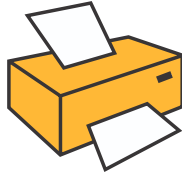


HOW TO: CREATE A COTTAGE GARDEN



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HOW TO**

INTRODUCTION

Any backyard can be transformed into a charming and romantic cottage garden, with none of the hard work from days gone by.

Modern cottage gardens concentrate on the ornamental rather than the functional side, but if they are well designed, they will retain the special rural charm from years gone by.

There will be climbers on house walls, and along the fence; hollyhocks might grow up to the cottage eaves; there should be big, generous borders where flowers of all shapes and sizes grow.

The most decorative vegetables and salad crops might be grown amongst the flowers while less pretty plants like cabbage or kale could be grown apart, probably behind a screen of some kind.

All these features are perfectly possible, whether your house is rural or urban, and will all help to develop the authentic style.

SKILL LEVEL ● ●

● First Time Project ●● Novice DIY'er ●●● Basic DIY Skills Required ●●●● Practised DIY'er ●●●●● Experienced DIY'er

TO COMPLETE THIS PROJECT YOU WILL NEED...

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------|
| • Fork | • Tape Measure | • Gravel |
| • Hammer | • Timber for Arches | • Paving Slabs |
| • Nails | • Trowel | • Plants |
| • Screwdriver | • Wire | |
| • Spade | • Gravel | |
| • Spirit Level | • Paving Slabs | |

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DESIGN HINTS

Simplicity is the key. Most cottage gardens consist of a path making a more or less straight line to the door - front or back - with beds or borders on either side.

You can develop variations on this simple theme, by increasing the number of paths, but most of the garden's appeal comes not from the design, but from the planting.

Structural features or focal points can be supplied by trees - the older and more crooked the better - old walls, possibly a brick-sided well or perhaps a rose arch or simple pillar.

Once you move beyond that basic simplicity, you are straying from the cottage concept. Does your garden have any interesting features - an old tree? Outhouse? Even an old coal bunker? If it does, this could be incorporated into your cottage garden design and made into a focal point.

DESIGN TIPS

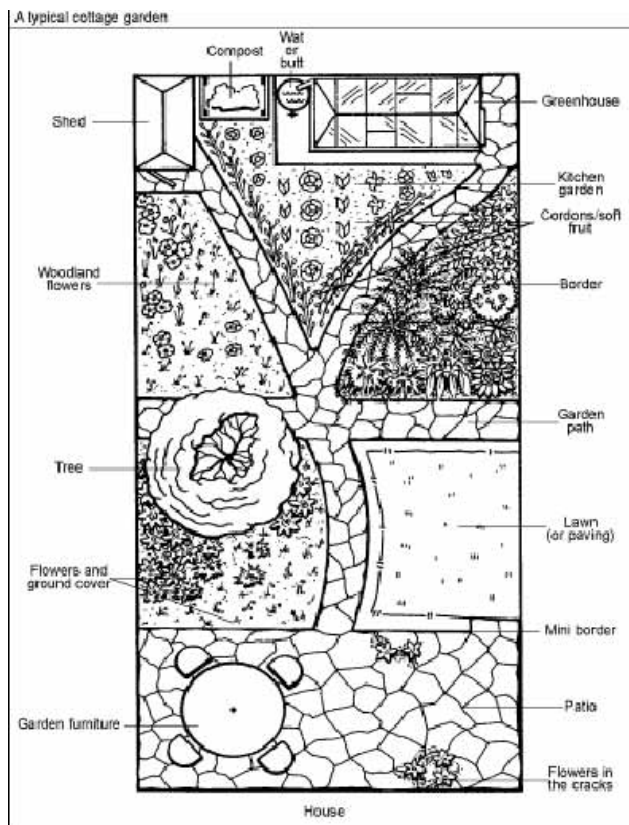
- Think about your overall layout, use pathways to divide the area into different sections. As well as leading from one spot to another, the pathways are very important for sight lines. Site them so that a pleasing view or an interesting feature appears at their end.
- Divide up your garden. Use low hedges, low walls or even espalier fruit. But keep the design as simple as possible.
- Lay subsidiary paths or stepping stones This will help so that you can get right in amongst your plants. It will also enable you to reach all parts of the borders and work the soil more easily, as well as getting closer to enjoy the flowers.

PLANTING SCHEMES

Creating the cottage effect is not quite as easy as it first appears. Relaxed and informal though the planting must be, make sure you:

- select your colours carefully
- choose plants that are able to blend comfortably with a rural ambience.

Highly-bred plants with very large flowers, such as dahlias, hysanthemums or modern hybrid roses can look at odds with the rest of the planting. Their colours are more likely to clash, or at least to look out of kilter with the rest of the cottage flowers.



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Plants that have lots of small or middle-sized flowers will blend together far more easily, just as wild meadow flowers do, even if their colours strike discord with each other.

Take a lesson from fine art! Try to create, with your flowers, an effect that resembles a painting composed from hundreds of coloured dots, rather than continuous blocks of colour.

PLANTING BY AREA

Once you have divided your garden into specific areas, you can begin to arrange the plants to create a special mood or theme within each of the areas.

There is no need to stick rigidly to these suggestions, but here are some examples of how you might treat each area:

NEW FOCAL POINTS

Each area needs a central feature that can draw attention to itself, so that it sets the special mood. You might want to plant a feature shrub: a lilac (*Syringa*) or mock orange (*Philadelphus*), for example, to give lovely blossom in spring and provide later shade.

On a newly erected arch, or a pillar, you could place a couple of climbers - a rose (*Rosa*) with a late summer-blooming clematis perhaps, or a honeysuckle (*Lonicera*). Remember that evergreens are lovely in cottages too, especially hollies (*Ilex*) of all kinds, or such flowering evergreens as viburnums (*viburnum tinus*).

COMPOSING THE PLANTS

Use the central feature to set the colour trend for each section, underplanting each one with a combination of low-growing shrubs and herbaceous plants which reflect, or contrast those colours. Remember seasonality, and include something for autumn and winter, as well as spring and summer.

RING THE CHANGES

You may not get your planting quite right first time - few of us do! But the fun of gardening is making gradual changes as you become more familiar with your plot. You can hone your planting year after year, and derive a great deal of pleasure from watching the gradual changes take effect.

USE LOTS OF ANNUALS

To step up colour, and to heighten your enjoyment, be prepared to beef up your cottage borders with temporary plants. Hardy annuals such as cornflowers (*Centaurea*) and shirley poppies (*Papaver*) can be directly sown from seed to produce wonderful bursts of colour and, if happy, will re-seed themselves year after year. They have the habit of making any planting look wild and random - just what you want.

For further colour you can even use bedding plants, not massed formally, but dotted here and there where gaps might have appeared. Tobacco plants (*Nicotianas*), petunias, snapdragons (*Antirrhinums*), busy lizzies (*Impatiens*) and monkey flowers (*Mimulus*) are particularly handy for this.

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And don't overlook the beauty of such traditional cottage biennials as sweet Williams (*Dianthus*), Canterbury bells (*Campanula*), foxgloves (*Digitalis*), honesty (*Lunaria*) and mulleins (*Verbascum*).

FOOD DEPARTMENT

By all means raise herbs, fruit or vegetables in a cottage garden. If neatly grown, they can be as pretty as a flower border.

Rows of lettuce or ornamental cabbages (*Brassica*) can be spruced up with coloured flowers and if you select French marigolds (*Tagetes*), you will also inhibit some insect pests, while attracting beneficial hover flies.

Consider edging the food border with cordon soft fruit, or with espalier apples or pears.

COTTAGE WALLS

In a cottage garden, especially a small one, vertical surfaces are even more important than the borders.

A romantic cottage, perhaps a thatched one, would look gorgeous with roses (*Rosa*) on its walls, honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) curling seductively round its windows and with hollyhocks (*Alcea rosea*) growing up to its eaves.

Boundary walls or fences, too, need furnishing with a rich mixture of scrambling plants.

HERE ARE SOME SEASONAL IDEAS FOR COTTAGE CLIMBERS:

WINTER:

Winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*) - yellow flowers from November to March. Japanese quince (*Chaenomeles*) and Forsythia for late winter.

SPRING:

Clematis *alpina* and *C. Macropetala*. Wisteria (must grow on a hot, south wall). *Cotoneaster horizontalis* - a great vehicle for other climbers. Honeysuckle (*Lonicera*) for a sweet fragrance.

SUMMER:

Roses (*Rosa*), Summer jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*), Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica* 'Halliana') bloom from June to frost.

AUTUMN:

Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) or Virginia creeper (*P. quinquefolia*) for superb autumn leaf colour.

GOOD ALL YEAR:

Ivies (*Hedera*) of all kinds, all wildlife friendly evergreens which provide cover and berries. *Hydrangea petiolaris*, for a shady wall, has lovely tan stems, fresh green leaves and creamy lacecap flowers.

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Consider growing vigorous climbers into an old tree. Clematis montana is good for this, as are both honeysuckles and rambling roses.

PLANTING RECIPES

Here are some specific planting ideas to get you going.

YELLOWS, CREAMS AND BLUES

Central feature:

A rose arch planted with the yellow rose 'Golden Showers' and dark blue Clematis jackmanii.

Subsidiary shrubs:

Creamy yellow broom (Cytisus x Praecox), blue and silver Caryopteris x clandonensis for summer and autumn colour, plus lavenders (Lavendula) and Russian sage (Perovskia 'Blue Spire').

Herbaceous:

Campanulas (all kinds), lupins (Lupinus), sneezewort (Achillea 'The Pearl'), blue or white columbine (Aquilegias), delphiniums, or such blue cranesbills as Geranium 'Johnsons's Blue'.

FIERY HUES

Central feature:

Large specimen of Kerria Japonica or a crab apple (Malus) such as 'John Downie'. Alternatively, furnish a pole or arch with red climbing roses such as 'Danse de Feu' or 'Scarlet Fire'.

Subsidiary shrubs:

Spiraea ('Gold Flame'), cotton lavender (Santolina), shrubby cinquefoil (Potentilla 'Red Ace'), Cape figwort (Phygelius Aequalis), St John's wort (Hypericum 'Hidcote').

Herbaceous:

Oriental poppies (Papaver), sneezewort (Achillea 'Moonshine'), golden rod (Solidago), bright red Penstemons, dark red pinks or carnations (Dianthus) and coneflower (Rudbeckias). Add vivid annuals such as Californian poppy (Eschscholzia) and Mexican sunflower (Tithonia), both orange or red annual poppies (Papaver).

Specials:

Chocolate cosmea (Cosmos), Anisodonteia.

ROMANTIC PINKS

Central feature:

An old apple tree. Failing this, try butterfly bush (Buddleia 'Pink Delight' or B. 'Lochinch') as a central plant, or a rose pillar again, this time furnished with pink roses 'New Dawn' or 'Albertine'.

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Subsidiary shrubs:

Wormwood (*Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'), rock roses (*Cistus* 'Silver Pink' and *C. purpureus*), fuchsias, hydrangea, tree mallow (*Lavatera*).

Herbaceous:

Stoncrop (*Sedum spectabile* 'Autumn Joy'), pink penstemons, germander (*Teucrium Chamaedrys*), pink paeonies (*Paeonia*), carnations (*Dianthus* 'Doris'), phlox.

Specials:

Nerines, for autumn pink.

Specials for fragrance

Fragrance is an essential part of the cottage garden experience. Be sure to include at least three of the following plants in your scheme:

Summer:

Jasmine (*Jasminum officinale*) - climber. Lavender (*Lavandula*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus*), chocolate cosmos (*Cosmos*), roses (*Rosa*), phlox.

Autumn:

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera Japonica* 'Halliana') flowers from midsummer onwards, late flowering lilies (*Lilium*), viburnum (*Viburnum x Bodnantense*).

Winter:

Snowdrops (*Galanthus*) and aconites (*Eranthis*).

Spring:

Wisteria, mock orange (*Philadelphus*), early Dutch honeysuckle (*Lonicera* 'Belgica').

Shade plants

Almost every garden has at least one shaded area, and in a cottage style, this is perfect for developing a woodland feel.

Try to assess the level of shade - deep shade is more difficult to plant for than a spot which receives a little sunshine for part of the day - and plant accordingly.

Plants marked with an * are suitable for dense or light shade.

Winter:

Winter jasmine (*Jasminum**).

Spring:

Kerria*, Forsythia, rock cress (*Arabis*), columbine (*Aquilegia*), bleeding heart (*Dicentra*).

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Summer:

Cape figwort (Phygelius), firethorn (Pyracantha), bellflower (campanulas - some), cranesbills (Geranium - some), foxglove (Digitalis).

Autumn:

Hollies (Ilex*), laurel (Laurus*), Skimmia, Virginia creeper (parthenocissus*).

Good all year:

Ivy (Hedera*), hydrangeas (all), periwinkle (Vinca minor* and V. major*), viburnum (Viburnum tinus*).

PATHWAYS, PAVING, NOOKS AND CORNERS

One of the great charms of cottage gardening is that every nook and cranny can be turned into a planting opportunity.

Go for small plants or alpines, to fill up cracks in paving, wall footings, small spaces at the front of a border or even allowing plants to develop in the pathways themselves.

If these are made of gravel, it should not be difficult to make sure the plants do not spread too much.

PLANTS SUITABLE FOR PAVING OR PATHWAYS

Sweet Williams (Dianthus barbatus), cushion saxifrages (Saxifraga), creeping thymes (Thymus) and small stonecrops (sedums). Houseleeks (Sempervivum) are good too, for cramming into crevices.

WALL FOOTINGS OR BY STEPS OR TERRACES

Try all the above plus rock roses (Helianthemums), the pink-flowered Gypsophila repens, bellflowers (Campanulas) and creeping phloxes.

TO COVER GROUND MORE QUICKLY

Try snow-in-summer (Cerastium) with rock cress (Arabis), aubrietas and London pride (Saxifraga x urbium), but watch for invasiveness.

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PLANT LISTS

ALPINES

Alpines

AVAILABILITY

March - May

CLIMBERS

Boston ivy (Hedera)
Clematis
Climbing Hydrangea (Hydrangea
petiolaris)
Honeysuckle (Lonicera)
Jasmine (Jasminum nudiflorum)
Knotweed (Polygonum)
Virginia creeper (Parthenocissus)
Wisteria

AVAILABILITY

February- May
February - September
February - June
February - September
November- April
February - September
March - September
April - May

FRUIT

Blackcurrant
Fig
Gooseberry
Grape Vine
Rhubarb
Strawberry

AVAILABILITY

March - April
April - May
March - April
April - May
April - May
March - April

GRASSES

Assorted (including Pampas)

AVAILABILITY

July - August

HERBACEOUS

Anemone
Astilbe
Bellflower (Campanula)
Bleeding heart (Dicentra)
Canterbury bells (Campanula)
Carnation, pinks (Dianthus)
Columbine (Aquilegia)
Coral flower (Heuchera)
Chrysanthemum
Coneflower (Rudbeckia)
Coreopsis
Cranesbill (Geranium)
Day lily (Hemerocallis)
Deadnettle (Lamium)
Dwarf Phlox
Evening primrose (Oenothera)
Foxglove (Digitalis)
Gaillardia
Geum
Golden rod (Solidago)
Gypsophila
Hellebore (Helleborus)
Ice plant (Sedum - autumn flowering)
Iris
Jacob's ladder (Polemonium)

AVAILABILITY

August - September
April - June
April - June
April - May
April - June
April - May
April - June
May - July
April - June
June - July
April - June
April - June
April - June
May - July
May - June
May - June
April - May
April - June
April - June
June - July
April - June
February - March
July - September
May - June
May - June

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Lady's mantle (Alchemilla)	April - June
Lamb's tongue (Stachys)	May - June
Larkspur (Delphinium)	April - June
Leopard's bane (Doronicum)	April - May
Lobelia (Lobelia Queen Victoria)	June - July
Lupin (Lupinus)	April - June
Michaelmas daisies (Aster)	August - September
Mullein (Verbascum)	May - June
Oriental poppy (Papaver)	April - May
Phlox	May - June
Plaintain lily (Hosta)	May - July
Red hot poker (Kniphofia)	May - June
Scabious (Scabiosa)	April - June
Shrubby cinquefoil (Potentilla)	May - June
Stonecrop (Sedum)	July - September
Sweet Williams (Dianthus)	April - May
Yarrow (Achillea)	April - June

HERBS

Bronze fennel	May
Chives	March - May
Marjoram	March - May
Mint	March - May
Parsley	March - May
Rosemary	March - May
Sage	March - May
Tarragon	March - May
Thyme	March - May

ROSES

Climbing rose	March - August
Shrub rose	April - July

SHRUBS

Broom (Cytisus)	February - May
Butterfly bush (Buddleia)	July - August
Cape figwort (Phygelius)	May - August
Caryopteris	August - September
Cotoneaster	February - June
Firethorn (Pyracantha)	October - May
Flowering currant (Ribes)	February - April
Forsythia	February - April
Hardy plumbago (Ceratostigma)	August - September
Hibiscus	July - August
Holly (Ilex)	February - April
Hydrangea	May - August
Japanese quince (Chaenomeles)	February - April
Kerria	February - April
Lavender (Lavandula)	February - September
Lilac (Syringa)	March - May
Mock orange (Philadelphus)	April - June
Periwinkle (Vinca)	February - April
Rock rose (Cistus)	May - July
Russian sage (Perovskia Blue Spire)	August - September

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Shrubby Senecio (Brachyglottis)	March - May
Spiraea (Spiraea Anthony Waterer)	March - May
Spiraea (Spiraea Arguta)	February - April
St John's wort (Hypericum)	March - July
Tree mallow (Lavatera)	May - September
Viburnum (Viburnum Dawn/Fragrans)	October - March
Viburnum (Viburnum Snowball Tee Sterile)	March - May
Weigela	March - May

Unfortunately, due to seasonal availability, we are unable to guarantee that certain plants will always be obtainable in-store. Please consult your local store staff for further details.