

Q&A



I'm worried about when to prune my rhododendrons

When and how should I prune rhododendrons?
Dylan, via email
Rhododendrons don't need lots of pruning except to remove any dead or diseased wood and flowers. If the bush has overgrown, it can be cut back hard in spring by removing about a third of each stem's length. Then mulch, water and feed (especially if the soil conditions are poor) to encourage new growth.



How do I prevent my baskets being hung out to dry?

How can I keep my hanging baskets moist? They seem to dry out very quickly. Shirley, Mansfield
When planting up your basket, bury a water bottle diagonally with holes spiked into it, so that just the top pokes slightly out of the edge of the basket. Once the bottle is filled with water, it will gradually seep out into the soil to keep it moist, and you can add more water easily to keep it topped up.

TIP of the week

Empty Tic-Tac sweet boxes are perfect for storing leftover seeds; just remember



Nurture gardening in children so they can reap a lifetime of benefits... with our annual competition

Kids grow for gold

Give kids the joy and excitement of gardening and make them eager to play, grow, and learn more – and even win a cash prize to boost their efforts. As more people than ever take to their gardens during these unprecedented times, we're receiving record entries for our Cultivation Street 2020 campaign, sponsored by Miracle Gro® and supported by the Sunday Mirror. From sensory gardens to orchards, schools nationwide are helping pupils turn under-used spaces into delightful and delicious displays. To inspire your kids to grow for gold with our Cultivation Street contest, I'm sharing four of this year's stand-out entries so far...

Bright and beautiful
Vibrant and colourful flowers can cheer us up and add playfulness to a space. The jolly flowers of Antirrhinum

name from flowers that look like a dragon's mouth. When you squeeze the neck, it snaps just like a dragon, so these are sure to get little ones' imaginations going. The lively golden-yellow of marigolds in a sunny or partially shaded spot will also bring a sense of energy and enthusiasm to the garden. **Elmvale Primary School** in Glasgow has used the past few months to transform their once concrete-surrounded school. Its new garden is packed with raised beds, large tractor tyres and a music area. Turning their garden into a sensory haven, they have grown bright colourful plants in recycled tractor tyres, with the central piece a sunflower. Children are fascinated by the height they reach and how the flower head follows the sun. Teacher Allan Lynn explained:

used pine wood chip-pings to appeal to those with autism and sensory processing issues." **All things wild**
The wonderful world of wildlife fills children with a sense of curiosity and inviting creatures to the garden teaches them about eco-systems right under their noses. There are plenty of ways to incorporate habitats and plants that birds, bees and beneficial insects love, which will keep them coming back for more. One of my all-time favourite plants is Buddleja davidii (butterfly bush) which has sprays of purple, fragrant flowers that are perfect for pollinators. Planted in well-drained soil in a sunny or partially shaded spot, they thrive, attracting plenty of butterflies. **St Albans CE Primary School** in Hertfordshire know all about attracting pollinators, having created a range of habitats for wildlife. Having to

improving their site for pollinating insects like bees and butterflies with mini garden areas, which with their own purpose, attracts a variety of wildlife. Their wildlife pond features a log mound and stump, placed to attract toads, newts, and slow worms. They also have an amazing insect hotel which the children built, and they planted trees strategically close together to attract a variety of birds. Julie Newman, outdoor educator at St Albans Primary, said, "During closure, this is the space where children chose to eat lunch, surrounded by birdsong and dancing bees and butterflies. It works a magic on the soul that is hard to put down in words." **Tuck in**
Growing veg is a great way to educate kids on where food comes from. Their enthusiasm, wonder and fulfilment at

some great educational questions. **Aston Keynes C of E Primary** in Swindon, Wilts, covers all bases with kitchen delights, including a herb garden, fruit trees and vegetable beds. This year pupils have grown more than ten buckets of potatoes and, pre-lockdown, were selling leftover veg to a pub. Teacher Stuart Jackson gives them free rein. "I let the children sow whatever they want," he says. "We believe they must lead. The adults are just there for support." It's not just school gardens that encourage children – getting involved in community gardens is a great way for them to engage and share their energy with people who need it most. Kids help out at community garden

group includes survivors of depression, bipolar disorder and anxiety, and their children. Founder Tracy Carr grew up on a farm shares her wide knowledge with volunteers. It's a welcoming space and kids have their own corner, complete with a pond and hedgehog haven. An introduction to the garden and nature like this instils kids with senses of achievement and responsibility to nurture and care for plants and wildlife which will in turn benefit their own wellbeing as they grow older. **Cultivation Street 2020** is supported by Miracle Gro® and entries are now open. Whether a school or community garden, we want to celebrate what you've done in the weeks of lockdown and reward you with a share of £12,000

ACHIEVEMENT
Aston Keynes



TRANSFORMED Elmvale School



CAN DO ATTITUDE
Helper Isabelle at Lost the Plot



HERBS
St Albans



OFFER OF THE WEEK

New for 2020, this premium Gardenia Golden Crown will add elegance and fragrance to the summer garden. The first stable Gardenia jasminoides with golden variegated foliage, the striking dark green and yellow edged leaves are guaranteed to create an impactful display. In summer months, beautiful double white flowers appear, with a spectacular fragrance impossible to ignore. It's the perfect variety for patio pots and containers – 9cm pot plants supplied. Buy one Gardenia Golden Crown for £13.99 or order two for only £19.98, saving £8. Free delivery within 14 days. To order by debit/credit card call 0843 922 5000 quoting SMTG140 or visit www.mirrorgardenoffers.co.uk



GADGET

A portable windbreak could help make your garden even more idyllic this summer, especially if you're in an exposed spot. They're also fantastic at providing shade. This portable kit contains ropes, pegs, poles and a triangle-shaped sail sized 3m x 3m x 2.5m. It's robust and easy to assemble. I found it for £25.99 via primrose.co.uk



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