

features@sundaymirror.co.uk
 daviddomoney.com
 @daviddomoney
 /daviddomoneytv

time to

DIG IN



with DAVID DOMONEY

Q&A



How can I create a low-maintenance cottage garden?

I want to turn my outdoor space into a cottage garden to make it easier. Are there any rules or no-nos? Michael, Southend, Essex

The beauty of cottage gardens is that there are no rules. Let sections of your garden go wild, plant Swiss chard in with ornamentals and raspberries within your borders. A wildflower section will also be low-maintenance and pollinators will love it too.



Can I do anything productive with all my fallen leaves?

As we gradually move into autumn, what is the best thing to do with fallen leaves? Jill, Exeter

Use autumn leaf-fall to create leaf mould, which is a great soil conditioner. Simply pile the leaves together - ideally in a hessian bag so moisture can get in - and leave behind a shed for a year where they will break down. It'll be worth the wait as you'll have a free and eco-friendly soil improver.

TIP of the week

Protect your autumn bulbs from squirrels with soap. Use a cheese grater to get some shavings and place them nearby - they hate the taste!



Meet the Cultivation Street winners using their gardening skills to transform lives

Today, I have the pleasure of revealing more of our incredible Cultivation Street 2020 winners. And, with a record number of entries in this year's competition, boy was judging tough! Last year we launched a new category - Gardens for Better Health - to reward community gardens that have a positive impact on the mental or physical health of locals and, of course, their volunteers.

Quite simply, we were overwhelmed with stories revealing how reliant some members of the community are on the gardens which provide a place to go and feel included and active.

Today we reveal our 2020 category winner, who receives £1,000. I'm also announcing the winner of Garden Centre Ambassador of the Year.

At Cultivation Street, we're lucky to have our competition represented across the country by a network of garden centres and their brilliant staff.

Each year, we love to hear what they have been doing to encourage community gardening.

Because of lockdown, many of our ambassadors were unable to fully develop their plans for this year - but it's been incredibly moving to see what they were doing to help local communities, despite the pressures of furlough.

Gardens for Better Health Allotment Angels, Dennistoun, Glasgow

This year's winner is the Include Me 2 Club in Glasgow. Volunteers started their Allotment Angel project in April 2018, taking over a very unkempt allotment plot in the city's East End.

With a railway line on one side and tenements on the other, it had been used as a dumping ground for junk.

But now, the allotment is a meeting place where volunteers and locals - many of whom have additional support needs, learning difficulties or suffer from mental health issues - go to make friends.

The volunteers have created a country garden, bursting with colour and wildlife.

With a huge array of fruit and vegetables growing in multiple raised beds, you would think they had been there for decades.

A sensory garden, where the pathways are edged with lavender, apple mint, lemon balm and other fragrant delights, even has a bridge made from pallets and wooden headboards.

With more than 40 different types



of herbs, fruit and vegetables growing at one time in this garden, lockdown threatened its very existence.

However, volunteers all took turns to keep the garden looking its best.

Susan Wilson, the Include Me 2 Club's lead volunteer, said: "We are absolutely over the Moon to have won the Gardens For Better Health category in Cultivation Street."

"It is testament to the hard work and dedication of the team of volunteers we have, which has been especially challenging during these difficult times."

The club will receive £1,000 cash and a hamper from our sponsor, Miracle-Gro.

Susan said: "We are going to purchase a few table top cookers,

waterproof clothing and specialised seeds to plant in the allotment.

"We're also going to get some poly-tunnels as we have over 70 vegetables and herbs growing at the allotment."

Judges' verdict: We're thrilled to name Include Me 2 Club as this year's winner - their garden is thriving, full of fresh produce and visually spectacular. It exemplifies what this category is all about.

Many of their volunteers suffer from learning difficulties and mental illness, and it has created a haven where these people can go to feel safe and included.

Reading stories of how the garden has helped those who were close to giving up really opened our eyes as to how important some gardens are to their community members.

Runners-up

Second, £750 and a Miracle-Gro Hamper - Lost The Plot, Deal, Kent; Third, £500 and a Miracle-Gro Hamper - The Ridgeline Trust Therapeutic Garden, Reading. Highly Commended, £250 each - OASIS Community Garden, Workshop and Iqbal Pocket Park, Peterborough.

Ambassador of the Year

Zoe Stanmore, Dobbies, Southport

Zoe became an ambassador for Cultivation Street the year it was launched and has never failed to make us proud. With her own battle with

depression and fibromyalgia, she really is an advocate for gardening for mental and physical health therapy.

As well as her full-time job, Zoe works alongside many charities including Cradle, which helps bereaved parents with baby loss.

She regularly speaks to parents and encourages them to plant sunflowers in memory of the children they've lost.

Zoe even provided sunflower seeds to parents during the lockdown and suggested ways that people could start their own therapeutic garden.

She is also growing 500 geraniums that will be donated to a local hospital

“With a record number of entries this year, boy was judging tough!”

We've allotment to be proud of



PROUD Susan Wilson with members of the Include Me 2 Club in Glasgow

OFFER OF THE WEEK

Winner of the Chelsea Flower Show Plant of the Year award 2015, our hardy Viburnum Kilimanjaro shrub is guaranteed to make an elegant impact in any garden. From May, an abundance of pure white flowers cluster amid layered bright green foliage that resemble the snow-covered mountain. The foliage then transforms to shades of golden orange that give way to pink-red berries during the winter. Mature height 3m. 9.5cm pot grown plants supplied.

Buy one Viburnum Kilimanjaro for £11.99, or order three for only £19.97, saving £16. RRP £35.97

Please allow up to 28 days for delivery. To order by debit/credit card call 0843 922 5000 quoting SMTG160 or visit www.mirrorgardenoffers.co.uk



GADGET

This lawn sweeper will take away one back-breaking aspect of autumn. As you push it across the lawn, patio or drive, it will gather leaves effortlessly in a large rot-proof collecting bag. The tough nylon rotating brushes also sweep any dew and worm casts off the grass. It's ideal for bigger gardens, although some assembly is required. I found it for £69.99 via coopersofstortford.co.uk



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