Make a pretty POTAGER

Combine French flair with down-to-earth vegetable growing



Mix colours and textures, edibles and ornamentals

Productive plot

If you want to grow edibles without sacrificing a stylish garden, then a potager could be for you. Originally a French term for a place where ingredients for a soup or potage are gathered, it's come to mean a kitchen garden that's artfully planted with a tapestry of fruit, veg, herbs and ornamentals. It's great way to make a small space productive, and its strong structure means it looks good all year round.



Edge beds with hazel hurdles

Design details

A geometric layout twinned with abundant planting is key. Start with a focal point like an arbour, pot display or water feature, then make an orderly pattern of beds and paths around it. Raised beds work well and are more back-friendly than ones at ground level (less bending). Paths should be practical, so make them wide enough to trundle a wheelbarrow along. Lay brick pavers for fine-looking paths, but for something cheaper, self-binding gravel (which won't spread little stones everywhere) or bark chips do the job well. Keep beds looking crisp by edging them with woven hazel hurdles, metal strips or clipped lavender.

Looking up

Train apple, plum or cherry trees over ironwork or timber arches, and let cucumbers and squashes scramble up wigwams and obelisks. Beans and peas are delicious and decorative climbers – try runner bean 'St George' (scarlet and white flowers) and pea 'Blauwschokker' (dusky purple pods). Use standard gooseberry or redcurrant bushes as vertical focal points and to provide easy-to-pick fruit.

WORDS: CHRIS MORLEY. PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY



Artichoke 'Purple Globe'

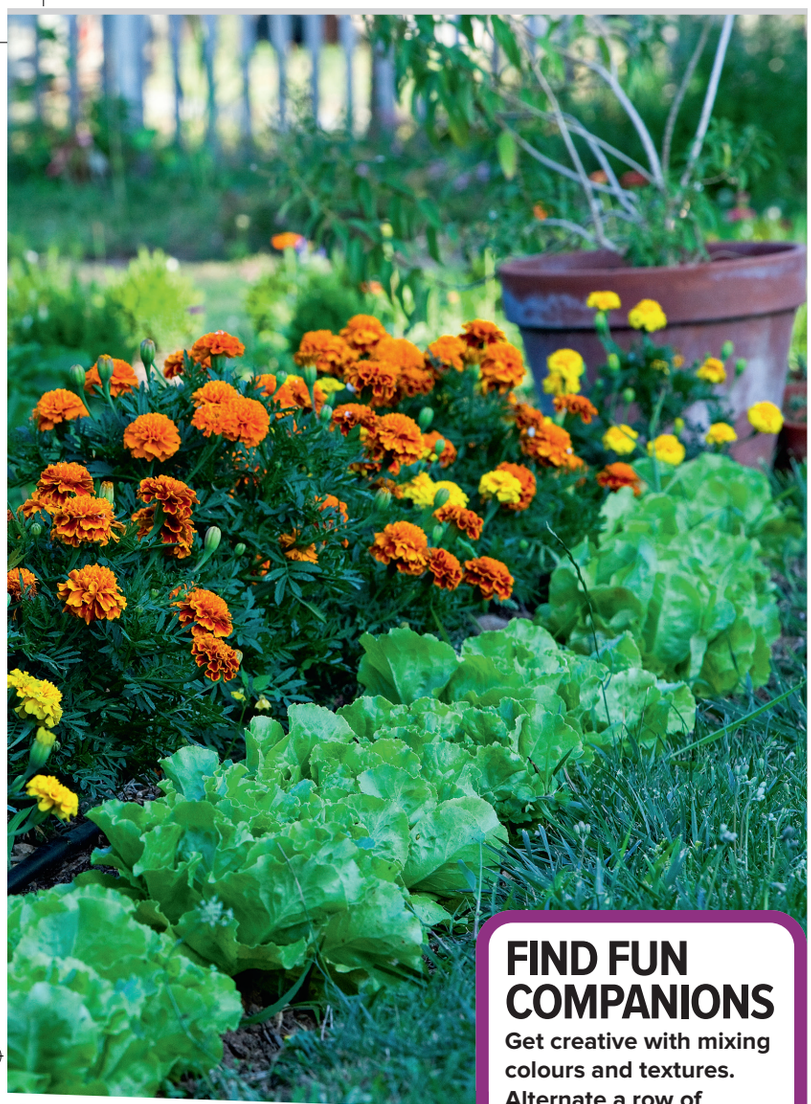
EYE-CATCHING EDIBLES

Fill beds with good-looking varieties, like these:

- **Kale 'Nero di Toscana'** is a fountain of bumpy, ribbed leaves. Its near-black foliage makes a great backdrop to scarlet, yellow and orange nasturtiums.
- **Courgette 'Tromboncino'** is a tasty variety with curly courgettes up to a metre long. Train it to tumble over an arch.
- **Artichoke 'Purple Globe'** is an architectural beauty that features deeply cut grey-green leaves and ramrod stems topped with violet heads.
- **Chard 'Bright Lights'** has spinach-like leaves on lemon, purple and red ribbed stalks.
- **Aubergine 'Pinstripe'** is a space-saving dwarf plant with cream-striped round fruits. Perfect for pots.



Chard 'Bright Lights'



FIND FUN COMPANIONS

Get creative with mixing colours and textures. Alternate a row of loose-leafed lettuce, like bronze-tinged 'Marvel of Four Seasons', with upright, lilac-flowered chives or curly-leaved parsley; or contrast chunky blue-green leeks with feathery yellow fennel. Add nectar-rich ornamentals too, like French marigolds (Tagetes patula), which attract pollinators and repel aphids.



Runner bean 'St George'





Redcurrents offer easy-to-pick fruit

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