

# Sensitive approach Design trends 2023 Reliable planting Simple pleasures Shifts in colour

In gardening, as in many areas of our lives, a new year calls for a fresh perspective, so we asked eight leading designers to share their thoughts on the challenges and trends in garden design for 2023. Climate change and sustainability continue to dominate the conversation, with a focus on resilient planting, natural and recycled materials and minimal human impact. It's time to view our gardens as part of a wider ecosystem



BRITT WILLOUGHBY/EVERETT

## Tom Massey

### Sensitive approach

With excessive heat and subsequent drought in the summer, along with more frequent storms and an increase in unpredictable weather events, resilient garden design has become really important. We need to be designing gardens that can tolerate current conditions but are also adaptable and able to deal with the climate of the future, which could be significantly different in a matter of years – London, for example, is predicted to be more like Barcelona by 2050.

The RHS has banned the use of the word 'pest', encouraging gardeners to value all forms of life in the garden, and to see our gardens as part of a wider ecosystem and landscape. The RHS Chelsea Flower Show is often a good way to measure trends in garden design, and many gardens at this year's show will focus on wildlife, sustainability and human impact, including a garden I am designing for the Royal Entomological Society. The garden aims to show visitors how important all insects are, not just the popular and well-known bees and butterflies, but other less beloved and publicised species too.

We, as gardeners, are important to insects' survival through the choices we make, from sensitive hard landscaping and habitat provision to planting for food and shelter, and a more gentle and relaxed approach to aftercare and maintenance.

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MATTHEW EVERINGTON

## Matthew Childs

### Reliable planting

The theme of gardens as a vehicle for us to reconnect with nature and in turn support wildlife and heal the environment will continue into 2023. A long, hot, dry summer last year was tangible evidence for many gardeners that changes are afoot, and we need to adapt our approach to how we make and look after gardens.

This year will see a focus on how a more sustainable garden is something positive that can enrich our lives. I envisage an approach to sustainability that sees gardens as joyful spaces where people, plants and wildlife can be mutually beneficial to each other. A good example of this is the growth in natural swimming ponds; fun for people and great watery habitats for wildlife too.

Choice of materials will again have a sustainable focus, with particular interest in reusing materials such as crushed concrete as a growing medium and mulch, as seen in the Walled Garden at Knepp Castle. Expect to see an even looser, lighter approach to hard landscaping with the odd pile of building rubble left in the garden, like the remnants of a ruin, to provide habitat for bugs, while also freeing people to loosen up a bit when it comes to garden style and maintenance.

Finally, plant choice will become more about reliability than conforming to a stereotype

of natural aesthetic. Important factors will be drought tolerance, successful planting communities and year-round colour and interest that makes us smile and is also beneficial to pollinating insects and wildlife.

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CHARLIE HOPKINSON

## Jinny Blom

### Simple pleasures

I think the next few years are going to be very 'hands on' in design, with people doing it for themselves much more. We are planning lots of cutting and vegetable gardens, chicken coops and small paddocks. There will be far less formality; people want to feel closer to self-sufficiency. We are all conscious of our dislocation from our food sources, and people want to change that.

Insecurity around the world is encouraging us to hunker down, enjoy what we have and make the most of simple pleasures: fire pits, ghillie kettles, camping out; wild swimming and being in the fresh air; keeping bees and supporting the fragile chains of the natural order of things; caring for precious resources, such as water; and generally being much cannier.

jinnyblom.com ▷

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JINNY BLOM