

# Amateur Gardening

## Art Editor

Started as a freelance designer in August 2005 with a promotion to Art Editor a year later. The title enjoyed a consistent rise in sales during my employment which was mainly down to great content, attractive and accessible layouts, a constant monitoring of market trends, and strong branding of the title.

Daily responsibilities included prioritising workloads, finding and promoting individual strengths within a team, and establishing productive working relationships. As Art Editor, I was expected to continuously evolve the

brand which involved working closely with the Editor and Group Art Director. Market research (mainly through focus groups and reader surveys) was used to evaluate the readership's perceptions. This research would culminate in the introduction of new page grids that could be easily used by all members of staff.

## Redesigning Brands

After analysing market research, my design team would work closely with Editorial Departments to restructure the title, covering everything from the

### Tried & tested

We try before you buy

## Kneelers and storage seats

Consumer editor **Julia Heaton** adopts a caddy seat for weeding and planting

**W**EEEDING the borders or putting in new plants inevitably means getting down on your hands and knees to be closer to the soil. Trouble is, as we get older our joints can creak and complain – especially when it comes to getting up again. And even the fittest can find kneeling for any length of time hard going. Garden kneelers and rolling seats allow you to sit and kneel in comfort – and the ones we've tested here all have the added benefit of providing some storage space for your garden hand tools too.



Score **14/15**

Score **13/15**

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### Strata Kneeler, Seat and Tool Store

£99

0345 640 3030  
argos.co.uk for store finder

**Features** ★★★★★  
Single polypropylene moulding with foam kneeler pad. Can be used as a seat and tool carrier with two deep storage compartments, or as a kneeler with slots for a couple of small tools. H: 13.5cm (5.3in), W: 26in (66cm), D: 9in (23cm).

**Performance** ★★★★★  
Sitting both as a seat and for helping yourself up from the kneeling position. Comfortable and the seat is a good height to be working from. Deep pockets hold even quite long-handled tools securely. Up-ended as a kneeler at your gardening spot the tools will fall out but you'll probably be using them anyway!

**Value** ★★★★★  
Excellent price. Does exactly what it's meant to.

### Draper Kneeler & Seat

£18.40

02580 494333  
draper.co.uk for stockists

**Features** ★★★★★  
Heavy-duty plastic frame and handles. Storage bench. Foam kneeler pad on underside. H: 15in (38cm), W: 22in (56cm), D: 8in (20cm).

**Performance** ★★★★★  
Comfy hand grips and seat, the latter at a good height. Foam pad is easy on the knees, but doesn't extend the whole width of the kneeler. Slight give to the plastic legs when used to push up from the kneeling position. Storage space is fairly limited and, unless you have a good-plated towel, I'm not sure the lookable lid is entirely necessary.

**Value** ★★★★★  
Easy to carry and tools won't fall out, but limited kneeling space.

### Seat 'N' Roll

£23.99 - £5.49 delivery

020 8133 0825  
best4garden.co.uk

**Features** ★★★★★  
Tough plastic construction with swivel casters and hinges. Has integral carry handles and four holes for tools. The lid clips onto the box to become a large storage compartment. H: 11in (28cm), W: 21in (53cm), D: 10in (25cm).

**Performance** ★★★★★  
Largest storage box of all – just about big enough to squeeze in a small pair of hedge shears. The large seat is comfy, a good working height, and the wheels roll easily over a lawn. Although too small to accept most hand tools or shovel handles, the four holes are big enough for one side of a pair of secateurs.

**Value** ★★★★★  
Not a bad price for a large, well-made rolling stool that carries lots of kit.

### Garland Sit, Step & Store

£17.25 RRP

01384 276256  
garlandproducts.com for stockists

**Features** ★★★★★  
Black moulded design consists of black step-up stool and seat that sits over a green long-handled storage tray with two deep compartments and two shallow oddments trays. Handles designed so you can lift both stool and seat. Stool has non-slip rubber feet. H: 12in (30cm), W: 16in (41cm), D: 11in (28cm).

**Performance** ★★★★★  
More comfortable if you sit on it, lightweight rather than acetex. The seat is strong and a good height for putting taller shrubs. Carry tray is a good size – you can park a lot of stuff in – and the two together are easy to carry one-handed.

**Value** ★★★★★  
Reasonable price for a versatile gardening seat and storage tray that has a variety of uses.

Score **13/15**

### 4 in 1 Seat 'N' Roll

£29.99 - £5.49 delivery

020 8133 0825  
best4garden.co.uk

**Features** ★★★★★  
All-weather, UV-protected black wheeled storage box with green seat and carry handles that clips on the box to act as a lid. Invert the lid and it becomes a kneeling stool with a foam pad. H: 11in (28cm), W: 23in (59cm), D: 9in (23cm). Simple assembly required.

**Performance** ★★★★★  
Famously robust storage copoly. Clipped on seat is comfortable at a good working height, and the wheels roll easily on a single lawn over a lawn. The seat is a comfy kneeler, but the arms are only just long enough to help you up.

**Value** ★★★★★  
Fancy but robust. A rolling stool, static seat, kneeler and tool box all in one.

### In the shade

Keep yourself and your plants protected this summer

0333 5771926  
gardensaree.co.uk

**Curain shading** £3.99

Don't let a stroke of a dry get to your greenhouse plants. This V-shaped curtain can be fixed to the roof to stop sun damage and has the double benefit of helping to maintain heat. There's about 50sq ft (4.6sqm) of coverage and a 12-month warranty.

### Coolroom shade sail

£89.99

01344 578 811  
waitrosegardens.com

Sail through a heatwave by blocking out 90 per cent of the sun's dangerous UV rays with a polyester-weave fabric that also allows air to circulate. Easily set up and great for a patio or garden play area. Comes in three colours with a five-year guarantee and measures 11ft 6in x 11ft 6in (3.5m x 3.5m).

### UV sun hat

£26.95 - £9.95

01753 765630  
sun-logs.co.uk

Ramp up the sun protection to factor 50 with the Outdoor Classic. Made of cotton it also has some clever features including an inner band of Hydro Cool Crystal. Bag off insect repellent, brass ventilation holes, anti-bacterial headband and a wide, adjustable chin strap. It's even Teflon coated for added water resistance against summer showers.

**Value** ★★★★★  
A great price that includes delivery.



## Getting started with Cacti

Once you get your head around their tongue twisting latin names you'll find they're very easy plants to grow

**T**HAT botanical names of some popular types of cacti – mammillaria, arborescens and gymnocladia – could sound like the names of some prehistoric animals that once roamed the earth. There's no doubt that these plants have some of the most difficult to pronounce names in the entire plant kingdom, but once you get your head around their tongue-twisting names you'll find they're among the easiest plants you could possibly grow. Perfect for raising in pots on a sunny windowsill, cacti largely originate from hot, dry regions of South America and North America. As they have to survive long periods of drought in their natural habitats, they store water in their fleshy stems. This makes them ideal cacti to look after as they only require the occasional drink to prevent shrivelling.

**Lots to choose from**  
There's a great variety among them. Plants can form narrow columns or have flatish pads that are fused

together, like the famous prickly pear, mumsillaria, arborescens and gymnocladia – could sound like the names of some prehistoric animals that once roamed the earth. There's no doubt that these plants have some of the most difficult to pronounce names in the entire plant kingdom, but once you get your head around their tongue-twisting names you'll find they're among the easiest plants you could possibly grow.

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### "Wear a tough pair of gloves when handling them"

Cacti do not produce leaves but have spines that grow from carbon-like growths, known as areoles. Some cacti have spines that are barely noticeable, soft to the touch or are hidden under hair-like growth. A number of species have really dangerous, sharp long spines or hooks that are quite showy, because they are curved, hooked or even multi-colored.

**Mail order cacti**  
Cactus Shop Devon  
01321 267878  
cactusshop.co.uk  
Snoothill Nursery, Lincolnshire  
01778 570 188  
cactushand.co.uk  
We found *Opuntia engelmannii* seeds, which experts think may be the same thing as *Opuntia phaeacantha* on Ebay for £2.29.

**Find out more**  
The British Cactus and Succulent Society (t: bass.org.uk) has over 80 branches in the UK.

content running order to signposting, colourways, layouts and fonts.

During my time at Time Inc, I worked on many other titles assisting Art teams to help interpret their own market research and fine-tune their design approach accordingly. I enjoyed the challenge of adapting to a variety of different briefs, as each title had its own unique set of objectives.

## Web design

Also tasked with the creation of the title's WordPress website, using styles and themes that were closely related to the magazine.

I eventually left Time Inc in August 2017 to start my own graphic and web design business. I gained a vast amount of experience in print and web design during my time with them.



## 5 popular cacti to grow on a windowsill

- 1 Rebutia** Largely native to Argentina, these generally form dense clumps of spherical stems covered with tiny silver spines. They freely produce big flowers in shades of red, pink, orange and white.
- 2 Mammillaria** Probably the most popular type of cacti, these make solitary compact balls or dense clusters of low-growing stems. Some are covered with tiny spines, while others are armed with balls that look like fishing hooks.
- 3 Chelidocactus** Slow-growing with slender, erect stems, it will form clumps in time. Best of the lot is *Chelidocactus setosus* – it's commonly called silver chorch due to its stems being hidden by a blanket of white spines.
- 4 Opuntia** This group includes whoppers like the prickly pear, but there are plenty of smaller species suitable for growing on the windowsill. *Opuntia microdasys elongata* is a dwarf variety.
- 5 Echinocactus grusonii** Better known as golden barrel cactus, this native of Mexico forms a ball with vertical ribs armed with sharp yellow spines. It's very slow growing, reaching just 50cm in a decade.

### Anne's 5 golden rules for growing cacti

- Give them light** A sunny windowsill or greenhouse provides the best light. Harsh spring sunshine following low winter light can scorch, so provide light or greenhouse shading if necessary.
- Not too cold** Most cacti are happy to overwinter just above freezing, so aim for a minimum temperature of 45°F (7°C). While light is low, keep them dry and cool so they can rest and stop growing until spring.
- Minimal watering** Cacti need no water between October and late March. From March, water regularly whenever the compost has dried out. Feed using a cactus fertiliser for hardy cacti, healthy plants.
- Pot on** When a plant fills its container, move it on to a slightly larger pot, preferably in spring. Use dry compost and do not water for 1-2 weeks afterwards, as damaged roots are prone to rotting.
- Cactus compost** Some growers report that winter, after which plants are left dry until their normal watering regime. Use cactus compost or bulb mix and grit or coarse sand. Top dress with grit or small stones.

## Your Gardening Week

with AG's gardening expert Ruth Hayes

**Step by step Making it easy**  
Working with what you've got

- 1 Basics first** – test your soil to check its pH (acidity), then only buy plants you know will grow in it.
- 2 Place easy-care shrubs and perennials** to create a dense canopy that helps suppress weeds.
- 3 Don't be too tidy** – let an area grow slightly wild to make life easier and attract wildlife into the garden.
- 4 Avoid tender plants** such as perennials that need lifting and overwintering under glass.

**Plugging gaps in borders**  
Ruth shows how to keep your borders looking bonny

This week I tackled it by adding several bags of soil improver, removing old bedding plants and any that looked sickly or were in the wrong place, and sowing perennials and annuals to fill spaces.

The ideal herbaceous border has a mix of complementary colours, stand-out focal plants and a mix of plant heights, leafy textures and shades of green.

It should be planned so that it contains something of interest all year round.

This is achieved by using plants that have different flowering times as well as berry-producing shrubs, colourful foliage plants with interesting textures and ornamental grasses, seedheads and ornamental grasses.

## Keeping your borders in order

Simple maintenance tips to get the best from your beds

- 1 Get rid of weeds** to keep borders neat and prevent unwanted invaders stealing water and nutrients from plants.
- 2 Water regularly**. Ideally, install water butes somewhere convenient, so you don't have to lug watering cans too far.
- 3 Watch out for pests**. I found these small eggs among the roots of a lifted bedding plant. They were soon squashed!
- 4 Regularly cut back and deadhead** spent plants. It keeps them neat and encourages repeat flowering.

**Buying plants**

- I am still reeling from the shock of seeing a fungicide unfortunately a large one! for sale for £17 in my local garden centre.
- Buying border fillers need not be expensive. Trays of hardy annuals are a cheap way of filling gaps.
- I often buy plants from roadside garden stalls and open garden centres, and am a regular at plant stalls run by nurseries at my local weekly market.
- You can buy small perennials for around £2 (they soon grow), and chat to the stall holders who are happy to share their knowledge.

## Boosting a tired border in six easy steps

- 1 Remove old bedding and sickly plants**. Dig in some soil improver or well-rotted organic material.
- 2 Place plants on the soil**. In this pot, among the existing plants used you get the arrangement you want.
- 3 Place plants at the same depth as their rootball**. Check holes are deep enough before planting.
- 4 Baste out the roots**, especially those circling the pot. Place in its hole, and firm in to squash air pockets.
- 5 Water well and add a slug deterrent**. I'm using a worm-based product that also acts as moisture-retaining mulch.
- 6 Don't worry about gaps**. Given the right space, plants grow and create a healthy blaze of colour and foliage.