



1 Traditional values

Grass paths edged with clipped box hedges separate the beds in this traditional walled kitchen garden. The old espaliers, though no longer productive, have been lovingly maintained and preside over the garden, providing an atmospheric backdrop.

JACQUELINE



Arne Maynard is a leading garden designer based in London and Monmouthshire

Kitchen gardens

You don't need acres to create a productive kitchen garden; the secret of success lies in the way you organise your space

WORDS ARNE MAYNARD



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2 Beds of plenty

In these traditional gardens the pattern is based on simplicity and order. There is enough space for big beds with plenty of room between plants and rows, so it's ideal for growing larger vegetables such as potatoes, brassicas, asparagus and soft fruit.

3 Brick paths

A few rows of brick basket-weave make the grass path easier to negotiate with a wheelbarrow and provide just enough of a hard surface to keep the path from getting muddy in wet weather.



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4 Herbs & salads

I love simple, straight rows of vegetables. In this narrow wall bed alongside the wall we grow herbs and salads – crops that take up little space, including short rows of thyme, rocket and oak leaf lettuces.

5 Cutting beds

Other narrow wall beds are planted with peonies (such as this *Paeonia lactiflora* 'Karl Rosenfeld'), and later dahlias, for cutting. These flowers, like chrysanthemums and asters, belong in the kitchen garden, where they can be grown in rows by colour or planted in a riot of shades.

6 Good order

The emphasis here is on a formula that allows the beds to be easily worked and maintained. Straight chipping paths between the raised beds and plain oak finishing details create a lovely simplicity that keeps the garden looking good throughout the year.

7 Natural supports

We like using hazel to make the supporting structures for climbing beans and peas, as well as for training currants and blackberries. Hazel thinnings make lovely frameworks that are decorative and practical, and more in keeping with the context than bamboo canes.

8 New Elizabethan

This is a new kitchen garden made for an Elizabethan house in Devon. It's enclosed on two sides by old stone walls, on the third by the house and on the fourth by a yew hedge. Within the square space we've created four beds, each divided into four, and then subdivided into a further four.

9 Raised beds

Most vegetable gardens before Victorian times were planted on mounds for good drainage. Raised beds are a more organised way of doing this – you don't have to keep re-making the mounds. To match the period of the house, we've made these raised beds from oak posts and holding boards.



For me, the kitchen garden is the true heart of the garden, just as the kitchen is the heart of the house. My own vegetable garden is for growing flowers, herbs and vegetables, a mix I love, and it has a casual, country feel. But there's also a pattern to it, because it's organised for crop rotation. The system of moving different groups of vegetables – brassicas, legumes, onions, potatoes and roots – in rotation each year helps prevent the build-up of pests and diseases and increases soil fertility. Each group benefits from different conditions, so even if you only have one growing bed, it should be divided into plots.

I'm influenced by the patterns in old kitchen gardens. In Victorian and earlier kitchen gardens,

you can see clearly how the arrangement of beds and paths is based on a system of production.

When planning a kitchen garden, begin by establishing a pattern of beds, square or rectangular, divided by paths for circulation. Beyond this basic pattern, you can add further layers and divisions: edging for paths, height from trained fruit.

I feel a kitchen garden should always have some form of enclosure, whether a wall, a hedge or a picket fence. I think this goes back to early human instincts. When we first started growing plants for food they had to be protected from animals, and I believe there's something deep in the human psyche that responds when you walk into an enclosed garden – it just feels right.



I'm in favour of keeping traditional walled kitchen gardens true to their purpose or at least some sense of it, and not putting tennis courts or swimming pools in them. Equally, I will do all I can to preserve old fruit trees for the character and atmosphere they bring to a garden, even when they're no longer very productive.

In effect, it's the paths in the kitchen garden that create the spaces for the beds, and these may be hard or soft surfaces. Brick or stone work well for service areas and well-used routes, but grass paths are lovely when framed with a box edge, a hedge of rosemary or lavender, or a line of step-over apples (low, espalier apple trees). There's something pleasing about this repetition, which

starts with the outer walls, then scales down, moving inwards, creating one kind of enclosure within another. To my mind, cutting flowers such as peonies, dahlias, asters and chrysanthemums belong in kitchen gardens, and it's lovely to include a few rows if there's room. But it's the vegetables that are the essence of the place and the crucial aspect of planning is to allow for big, simple, clean beds that you can maintain in a practical way. If your growing space is limited, don't cram, be selective. Think of your plot as a delicatessen counter that's going to supply you with lovely salads, a few delicious new potatoes, tiny mangetouts or the first tender broad beans.

NEXT MONTH Water – from fountains to river banks.

10 Fruit pavilions

We've further embellished the garden by positioning small fruit cages at the corners of the beds. The cages contain currant bushes and other soft fruit, and they're shaped like little pavilions, made of oak and chicken wire. They add another layer of pattern to the garden.

Stockists

Hazel rods

For a directory of local suppliers see the Allotment Forestry website at www.allotmentforestry.com

Michaelmas daisies

(asters) are the perfect kitchen garden border flower. Old Court Nurseries has been a specialist in growing them since 1906. Tel 01584 540416, www.autumnasters.co.uk

Vegetable seeds

• W Robinson and Son supplies an excellent range of vegetable and salad seeds, and sends out small plants in season. Tel 01524 791210, www.mammothonion.co.uk

• The Real Seed Company specialises in heirloom and heritage cultivars of vegetable seeds for home gardeners. Tel 01239 821107, www.realseeds.co.uk

• Beans and Herbs is a Wiltshire nursery that stocks reliable cultivars for home gardeners, including heirloom varieties. Email info@beansandherbs.co.uk, www.beansandherbs.co.uk