

PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

JANUARY 2013 £3.99

What's hot in 2013
design trends and must-have plants

25 BEST
ENGLISH
GARDENS
TO VISIT

GARDEN INSPIRATION
FROM AROUND THE WORLD



PLANTING IDEAS
from a design masterpiece

letters

Have your say – we'd like to hear your views, so please write to us at: GARDENS ILLUSTRATED, 9th Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN, or email letters@gardensillustrated.com

Star letter

Plants versus lawns

I read with interest your article on artificial lawns [Talking point, issue 192]. I have a reasonably sized front garden and a generous back garden, but no grass. My excuse is that I, my husband and two children were a military family for more than 14 years. We moved every two years and always had a green lawn with each married quarters. By the time we moved back home to Sunderland, I had amassed a staggering 100 potted plants. Therefore, once we had settled home and bought our dream house and garden, you can imagine my unfurling desire to plant everything in our lovely garden and visualise their roots wiggling in the soil like toes in the sand! I simply decided to dig up the entire lawn that was in place when we bought our home and fill it with all manner of plants, shrubs and bulbs. I also have a woodland area, with my favourite plant of all *Cyclamen hederifolium* naturalising itself beautifully. I am now simply the luckiest lady to have the privilege of these gardens. Lawns are lovely, but boy are they time consuming and can't possibly add as much to a wildlife habitat as a mixed border. However, my daughter would now like some lawn for picnics, so I must come up with some ideas to incorporate some grass.

Marie Bainbridge, via email



CITY FLOWERS

Italian example

We arrived at the Piazza Vecchia in Bergamo in September 2012 as part of our summer tour of Lake Como and found to our delight the most enchanting 'pop up' garden – a garden that could have graced Chelsea, but in the heart of a beautiful Italian city. It was part of the 2012 International Meeting of Landscape and Gardening – an event that included a range of guest speakers including our own Andy Sturgeon and Cleve West.

Flower beds full of lovely perennial combinations, raised vegetable beds, vertical 'orchards', fountains and statuary – it had

everything. Even neighbouring shops had joined in by displaying boxes planted with vegetables, herbs and flowers. How I wish the sheer exuberance of this show garden could be beamed into the urban grey of the East Midlands city I live in. Come on town planners: bring some style to our cities in summer – plant up and green our cities.

Kevin Thompson, Derby.

READER RESPONSE

Duck and dive

Matthew Oates suggests keeping small breed ducks to reduce the slug problems in gardens [Talking point issue 191]. In our experience, it takes a year or so to become fully effective because it is only the smaller slugs and snails that the ducks enjoy. There are few sights more rewarding than a family of call ducks working their way through a flower bed, frisking all the plants in their hunt for delicacies, and gooseberry sawfly became a thing of the past in our garden. However, there is one downside – if you like frogs and toads, ducks do too!

Jenny Sandy, Cornwall.

TALKING POINT

Annie Gatti looks at the panic over the ash dieback fungus

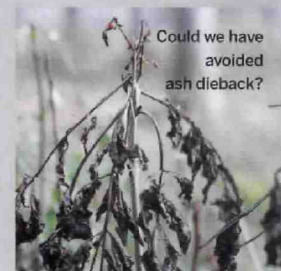


Annie Gatti writes regularly on gardens for the *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*.

There has been much finger pointing about the ash dieback fungus, *Chalara fraxinea*, in Britain. Gardeners are to blame because of their desire for imported plants; the government is to blame because it acted too slowly to ban imports; the horticultural trade is to blame because it has continued to bring in ash saplings from the Netherlands even though the virus was identified there two years ago. Ash seeds prolifically and is genetically diverse so there's hope that disease-resistant trees will emerge. Hence the advice to leave mature trees standing. But, with the increase in pests and fungal diseases in the past 20 years, perhaps gardeners, landscapers and foresters should heed the advice of the American tree expert Frank Santamour for urban tree planting: plant no more than 10 per cent of any species, no more than 20 per cent of any genus and no more than 30 per cent of any family.

WRITE TO US & WIN

The star letter wins a pair of Tobisho secateurs, worth £62. These award-winning Japanese pruners are hand-forged out of high-quality steel. For details visit www.niwaki.com



Could we have avoided ash dieback?

• What's your view? Write to us by post or email (details above). We reserve the right to edit letters.