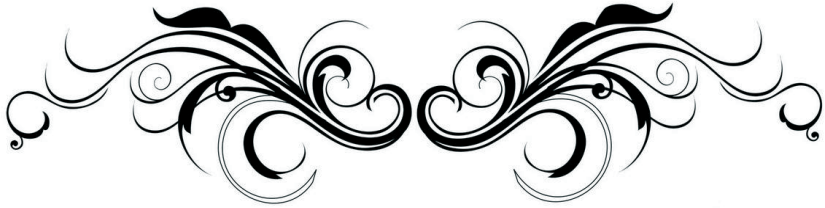


In and around Tilehurst



Trees and Plants for Your Front Garden

By Jean Rainey

Some good ideas to help you to make a
really nice front garden
and still have room for your car.

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Trees and plants for front gardens

Why should we change our Front Gardens?

Lots of front gardens are paved over for car parking. So why add trees and plants? To mitigate climate change, help CO2 absorption, reduce flooding and aid drainage, provide shade & cooling, help insulate your home, security, help wildlife, improve the appearance of your home and add value to your house. And why not? Tree roots may eventually damage drains, maintenance time & effort, cost and space. But there can be room for cars and plants and here we give you some things to consider.

Before you start...

It is important to check the ultimate size of any tree or plant, what conditions it needs and what maintenance and care it requires before choosing. Some parts of some plants are poisonous to people or animals e.g. laburnum seeds, yew berries, lily pollen (cats) – check a list of poisonous plants on the net etc. to make sure before planting if this might be an issue for you.

Lots of books, magazines and websites give advice, information and inspiration, also look at other people's gardens, plantings & plants for inspiration (and to see what NOT to do/plant!)

What sort of plants could you try?

Trees – natives are best for wildlife or any with flowers, fruits or seeds. You can plant anything from mighty oaks to dwarf willows. Popular small trees for front gardens are holly, birch, rowan, hawthorn, amelanchier and cherry. There are narrow columnar forms of some trees e.g. cherry, juniper, Irish yew if you want a tree that doesn't take up too much space.

Shrubs – no room for a tree? Try a shrub. Many need little maintenance and vary in size from large to tiny.

Smaller still? **Herbaceous plants** (usually die down in the winter and re-emerge in spring) again vary in size and generally require a little more care than shrubs but are less likely to get too big for their space.

Smallest? Seasonal **bedding plants** such as begonias, primulas, petunias, geraniums, cyclamen, winter heathers and pansies, though some last only a year, are ideal for brightening up a small space. **Bulbs** are also a good choice, once planted they usually require little care. Popular choices are daffodils, tulips, muscari (be warned though, in flower beds these can run rampant and may be best in a pot), snowdrops, cyclamen, nerine, iris and freesia.

What if you have no room or inclination for flower beds or permanent planting?

If don't want flower beds **containers** are the answer. Almost anything can be grown in a container from an oak tree to a single primula or a tiny pot of crocuses. Almost anything can be used as a container from expensive glazed pots, to planters made from pallets, old baths, tin cans, even old shoes! Remember that anything grown in a pot will need drainage, watering and feeding. You don't even need ground space to grow plants in containers; hanging baskets, window boxes, pots and planters designed to hang on railings and balconies, even pots that attach to drainpipes and fence posts, can hold a wide range of plants.

Any other possibilities?

Don't forget **hedges**, which can be made from many different plants from the classic privet to hydrangea, berberis, holly, beech, box, even roses or any shrub that can be hard pruned. Walls and fences can be used for some shrubs e.g. cotoneaster horizontalis, pyracantha or winter flowering jasmine and **climbers** such as clematis, jasmine, roses, passion flower, ivy or climbing hydrangea. Be particularly careful about choosing climbers though: things like wisteria, clematis montana, virginia creeper and boston ivy are rampant growers and need a lot of control and avoid russian vine at all costs; it will take over your whole garden!

Different styles

You can have plants and plantings in any style from formal topiary to exotic jungle, from cottage garden to Mediterranean herb garden, a border for butterflies and bees or just a mixture of anything that takes your fancy. And don't forget that you can grow fruit and vegetables in your front garden. Unless you are in a very polluted area, all you need to do is make sure you wash everything before eating it and you'll be fine. A wide range of fruit and veg can be grown in containers too and small fruit trees are easily obtained. There are even some varieties of tomato, strawberry, blackberry and blueberry that can be grown in hanging baskets. Fruit and veg will need a lot of watering and feeding though so bear that in mind.

Some suggested sources for further information

Try your local library, magazines such as *Gardeners World* or *Amateur Gardening*, websites such as gardenersworld.com or rhs.org.uk, books such as the Dr DG Hessayon 'Expert' series or just search the net for 'plants for front gardens' or 'front garden designs'.

Epilogue

Tilehurst Globe would love you to send us your ideas for planting out lovely front gardens. And we would also love to see your photos to put on our web site to show people what can be done.

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Go Local On a Better Environment

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