

Episode 102 show notes and advice

Episode description

In this week's episode of our '12 best' series, Sarah is joined by Garden Designer, Butter Wakefield. After initially bonding over their mutual love of colour, embroidery, and all things garden – Butter and Sarah take time to talk about the art of designing small gardens, and how to make the most out of outdoor space, no matter the size.

In this episode, discover:

- ❖ Butter's 12 rules for small and glorious outdoor spaces
- ❖ Small garden design ideas to spark inspiration
- ❖ Exciting ways to attract visiting pollinators

episode 102 advice sheet

Gary takes inspiration from the sustainable environment and design course he attended at Falmouth College, where he specialised in landscape design, sustainability, and longevity.

Butter's top tips for creating a gorgeous outdoor space

Think about scale (2:49)

Considering scale can certainly enhance the look and feel of any outdoor space.

- ❖ Butter suggests that instead of focusing on little pots in a small garden, go for one larger pot with either a magnificent tree or multi-stem shrub to bring scale and depth into the garden. It will lift the view and definitely add drama.

The wonder of water and marvellous mirrors (4:36)

- ❖ If you're based in the city where there's plenty of traffic and perhaps noisy neighbours, the sound of running water can evoke calm and tranquillity.
- ❖ Butter reveals that one of her recent projects, a 2 x 2 metre garden in Primrose Hill, was made elevated by a water cistern with built-in spout. Behind the cistern was a large mirror and trellis panel, which worked well to reflect sunlight and create sparkle.

- ❖ Sarah reflects on the recent biodiversity audit at Perch Hill and explains that bodies of water are excellent for supporting pollinators and encouraging wildlife. Water in the city is equally important to ensure that visiting wildlife has somewhere safe to rest and replenish.
- ❖ Butter has recently installed a large Corten water feature into her own wildflower meadow with a small solar powered fountain which keeps the water moving, great for dragonflies.

Introduce wildlife and wildflowers (8:11)

- ❖ When Butter was designing her own city garden, she chose to incorporate rolls of turf impregnated with pre-sown wildflower seed. The turf thrives in poor soil and adds instant intrigue to an outdoor space, which is forever changing and looks gorgeous. If you're short on space, replicating a similar look in pots on a balcony or terrace can give the same look and feel. It's a great pitstop for pollinators – bees, butterflies, and moths. Butter says she thinks everyone should have a little patch for flying visitors.
- ❖ Sarah says that plants like betony and agrimony will flower on until September, and something like wild marjoram will flower into October. A wildflower meadow isn't just an idea for summer, they also allow you to make the most of temperate climates in the city.
- ❖ Butter explains that for those who are looking to let go of their usual manicured garden and introduce more spontaneity, this is a great project to sink your teeth into.

Choose good lighting (12:39)

- ❖ Good lighting is a great way to achieve instant impact and is easy to deploy in a small space. Butter likes to add light that shines from different directions, and twinkly things hanging from trees to brighten up the darker evenings.
- ❖ Solar operated lighting is always a good idea and can help keep costs down.
- ❖ Sarah explains that she was initially worried that there wouldn't be enough sunlight to keep the solar powered lights working to their full effect, but this isn't the case, there's plenty of light even in the darker months. Like Butter, Sarah uses solar powered lights in the greenhouse and outside to add intrigue and charm. Sitting outside and looking outside with good lighting can really extend your view, even if it's raining.

Vertical emphasis (15:30)

Think about your boundaries and wall treatments.

- ❖ Butter says it's critical that gardens should have at least one tree to blend and blur the appearance of fences or walls, offering a more naturalistic look. Butter also really likes trellis and hanging lights too to spruce up the sides of small gardens.

Borrowing landscape (17:04)

- ❖ Butter explains that if you look to your neighbour's gardens and see something like a silver birch tree, planting your own silver birch creates the ultimate illusion. Repetition of theme ultimately helps to create a bigger view, which Butter says will enable you to believe that you have a bigger space than you actually do.

Texture and paving (18:19)

- ❖ Sarah suggests patterned paving and change in texture at ground level can also create an impressive illusion, allowing the space to feel larger than it is.
- ❖ Seize every opportunity to create more interest in small gardens. Butter loves eccentric paving and incorporating circles into rectangles and squares, which she says creates more opportunity for pattern and design, a must for any small space.

Furniture and making big decisions (19:36)

- ❖ If you have a new garden, or you're still in the planning stage, it's helpful to spend time in the garden through the seasons to see where the last shreds of sunlight might be, especially in the wintertime. This will mean that you're still able to have a nice coffee in the morning at a little table in the garden in sunlight.
- ❖ Concentrate on how and when the sun tracks around your garden before you complete any hard landscaping. It's important to know how you might like to use the space before making big decisions.
- ❖ Sarah says that tables nestled in the eastern or western light are modest, private, and personal. A great addition to any outdoor space.

Structural planting (22:20)

- ❖ Butter explains that she loves a clipped shape when it comes to bushes or shrubs, even if this in a pot. Hornbeam or yew are also lovely options for small gardens, but make sure you full stop these loose and lovely plants with something more clipped and structural for a real statement.

Sensational scent (23:00)

- ❖ Sarah and Butter agree that scent is so important in a small garden. There are loads of excellent providers of fragrance that are lovely for both pollinators and humans alike.