

Planting with Confidence

Planting Principles

- **Less is more.** Using less variety of different plants but more of individual plants will give a bigger impact and make the borders look less 'busy.' Repetition of plants also brings harmony and allows the eye to travel over the border
- **Planting in odd numbers** brings a more natural look and in groups to give more impact. 3s for perennials and 5s and 7s for bulbs
- To help all sorts of **wildlife** its best to plant a mixed variety of plants, simple flowers are often more wildlife friendly than more elaborate flowers.

Plant Shopping

- Always **check the roots** of a plant by knocking it out of its pot. Check for any grubs or for a plant that is pot bound. This is where it has been in the pot too long and its roots have grown round and round in the pot. If you get a plant home and its roots are like this you can snip into them with a pair of secateurs and tease the roots out with your fingers to try and encourage the roots to grow out. [Here's a video](#) showing you how.
- Autumn is the time for buying and planting **Spring Bulbs** like Daffodils, Alliums and Snowdrops. They are invaluable in extending colour in the garden and are easy to plant.
- www.crocus.co.uk is an online retailer that have a broad selection and database of plants that is extremely useful for research.
- Keep your receipts ... if a plant fails it is often possible to take it back if you have your receipt.



Plants

Shrubs and Trees are your backbone

Shrubs and/or trees provide structure all year round. Even deciduous shrubs and trees can provide structure in the wintertime with their skeleton structure and bring interest with bark colour and textures.

Trees and hedging can be planted in a row but avoid planting shrubs in rows. **Slightly stagger them** in and out of the centre to the back of the bed to make it look natural.

Be quite **generous** in how you space them out. I would leave at least 0.5 – 1m between shrubs to give them enough room to grow and allow for some gap filling with perennials.

Perennials are the gap fillers

Perennials have a **life cycle** where they grow flowers and then that flower stem and sometimes the leaves die back over the Winter. People panic at this time, but the plant will survive and thrive and can every 3 years or so be split to create new plants.

Perennials come in **all shapes and sizes**. I categorise them by height, into tall, medium height and ground cover. A mix of these works really well to ensure there is variety all year round.

Depending on your **'scruffiness' threshold** you can leave some flower stems and seed heads on long after they have died as they still provide interest and seeds for wildlife. Cut back the old flower stems and tatty leaves whenever it suits you from Autumn to Spring. And always give flower stems a shake to encourage any seeds to grow new baby plants for you.

Annuals bring Summer colour

The lifecycle of an annual begins and ends in one year. The classic summer bedding of Petunias and Busy Lizzies are a good example. But the wonderful thing about Annuals is that they are really **easy to grow from seed** and once in your garden you can collect the seed or let them set seed themselves for new baby plants for the next year.

Many of them are cottage garden staples like Sweet Peas, Cornflowers, Nigella, Poppies and Pot Marigolds. You can [sow these in Spring](#) or some can be sown direct outside in Autumn, so this might well be an easy way for you to get a head start on next year! You can read my article on [Autumn Sowing here](#).



Planting Layout

Here's how you can position the plants to give a 'landscape' of different heights, but by repeating the plants you're using you get continuity in colours and forms.

A bed should be at least 0.75m deep (preferably 1m+) to give the depth to plant things in layers from the climbers at the back through the shrubs and gap fillers.

Looking at the border straight on:



Looking at the border from above:



Resources

- Are you a visual person? Mark in a book or create a Pinterest Board to save your ideas. I'm at www.pinterest.com/akathegirlwhogardens with lots of boards with ideas for inspiration.
 - Use www.crocus.co.uk and www.rhs.org.uk to search their databases of plants and filter them to narrow down the choices.
 - Get to know your local independent Garden Centre ... the staff are always knowledgeable and keen to help.
 - Gardeners' World on BBC2 is great but my favourite Gardening TV Programme is Beechgrove which you will also find on iPlayer. It's made by BBC Scotland and is often on BBC2 early on a Sunday morning (after Match of the Day)!
 - Join my [Community Group for Gardeners on Facebook](#) where we share experiences and help each other to enjoy our gardens!
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I hope this guide helps you feel more confident about planting! If you'd like more help from me, here's how I can help:

Garden Hoedown – I spend an hour with you, in your garden or virtually, to talk layout, plants, lawns - or trampolines! I hope you come up with an action plan you can tackle to make your garden work for you.

Plant Shopping – we can either go shopping at a local garden centre together or I can shop for you at the wholesale nursery.

Plant Shortlist – I create a Plant Shortlist of plants that is tailored to your brief and your garden.

Planting layout – I can lay the pots out for you or a gardener to plant and I can produce a Plant Care Guide, so you know how to look after them.

Garden Design – I work with you to revamp areas of your garden or the whole layout

Best wishes and happy gardening!



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