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# ESSEX LIFE

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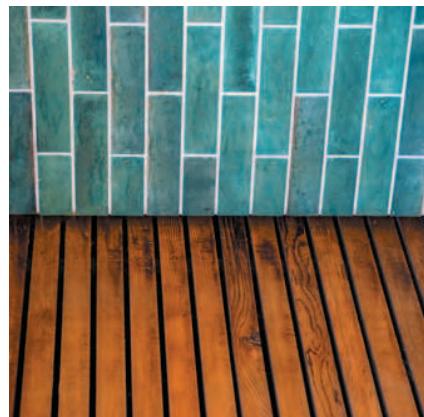
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# GARDEN DESIGN DIRT

Leigh-on-Sea-based **Katrina Kieffer-Wells** of Earth Designs shares her garden expertise



**clockwise from top right:** Select plants with the different foliage to give year-round interest; Bring some of the materials used inside outside; A garden for people that love to entertain

## Perfection takes planning

**A** well-designed garden can be a sanctuary, playground, dining room and party venue all rolled into one. However, perfection takes a little planning. Start by creating a mood board. Trawl the web and lifestyle magazines for images of gardens and products that inspire you. Be realistic. Don't aspire to replicate a large country estate if you have a small urban courtyard. Pinterest is a great tool for scrapbooking, but old-school magazine cut-outs can also be used to refine your preferences.

### CONSIDER YOUR ASPECT

The direction your garden is facing, or aspect, is key when deciding what to include in the space. Typically, in east-facing gardens the sun travels down the left-hand boundary from the house to the bottom, while in west-facing gardens it moves from the rear towards the house. North-facing gardens will get sunshine across the bottom of the space, while south-facing gardens are in full

sun throughout the day. Your aspect will determine the best location for patios and seating areas, as well as planting styles.

### WHAT'S YOUR LIFESTYLE?

Gardens need to fit in with your lifestyle. How many hours a week can you commit to looking after your garden? If you spend a lot of time away or working late, a low-maintenance garden might be the best choice. Consider ditching the traditional lawn in favour of easy-care planting. For those that do a lot of entertaining, a garden with ample seating and dining areas will be put to good use. A large family with dogs will find a large lawn and robust planting essential.

### CHOOSE YOUR MATERIALS WELL

There are more than mere aesthetics to consider. Does the material work practically for its intended use? For example, decking in a shaded area may not dry out and will become slippery and dilapidated over time. Do some research and take advice from suppliers.

Does it require lots of maintenance? Is it easy to install? The more you understand the materials, the better chance you have of creating a garden that will stand the test of time. Mix up textures and finishes and use the same materials in different places to create a sense of continuity. Pick materials that will provide year-round colour, such as Corten steel or perspex sheets.

### PLANTING SCHEME

Select a single colour scheme for flowering plants. Think about what that plant will look like when not in flower. Go for a variety of leaf shape and colours. Mix up larger shrubs and architectural plants with groups of perennials (in threes and fives). Leave space for plants to spread and thrive. ●

**Earth Designs are proud members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and the Association of Professional Landscapers.**

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