

CONSERVATION NEWS

West Kent & The Weald

Spring 2025 • Complimentary

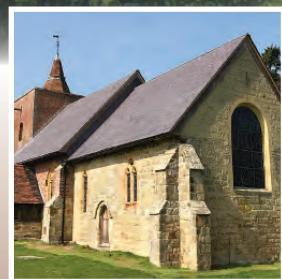
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Spring has sprung! (Well there have been a few nice days anyway!), and here at Conservation News we're preparing for warmer days, blue skies, and fun days out in the wonderful Kent countryside.

In our jam packed spring edition we've got articles on seasonal gardening, and introducing colour into your home, as well as our recommendations for the yummiest food and drink.

On top of that we've got features on driveways, the Edwardian home, and even how to pick the best art to decorate your period property.

So join us in welcoming in the new season, and enjoy your latest copy of Conservation News.

Dawn & Nadene

Competition winners from our winter issue:

A Cookbook for Winter:
Steve Smith from Wateringbury, Maidstone

Everybody Loves Chocolate:
Nicola Janes from Bekesbourne, Canterbury





FAIRFAX GALLERY



David Atkins 'Autumn Light, Camber Sands' Oil on Board 61 x 81cm



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23 The Pantiles, (Lower Walk), Royal Tunbridge Wells
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SPRING 2025

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GARDEN NOTES

It's a joy to see the garden wake up after winter. The highlights are spring bulbs, blossom and flowering shrubs. Spring is also the busiest time in the garden, so try to get ahead before the weeds start growing. This is the time to sow seeds and to make weeding a priority.



A sunny outlook

Now is the time to sow sunflowers for a super summertime display. For best results plant sunflower seeds from early March to mid-May, but always check the seed packet as some selections need more time to grow than others. Sow the seeds individually, 3cm deep in pots of multipurpose compost on a sunny windowsill or in a greenhouse. Transfer young plants outdoors when the danger of frost has passed.

IT'S HIP TO SNIP

Topiary plants are perfect for high-profile spots close to the home that are on view all year round. It's a top choice for front gardens and a pair of identical plants flanking a doorway or gate has a timeless appeal. In patio pots or raised beds, topiary shapes make excellent standalone features or create handsome contrasts to seasonal flowers.



SPRING AT HEVER CASTLE

From blossoms to bluebells, Hever Castle & Gardens in Kent have got spring covered this year with a colourful celebration that promises to delight this April. With thousands of tulips, spring bedding, cherry and apple blossom galore, magnolias, early rhododendrons, hyacinths, camassias and bluebells, there's much to celebrate in the grounds. Visit hevercastle.co.uk





Alpine adventure

Alpine troughs are perfect containers to let your garden design skills run riot, but in a small space. Alpines are small, pretty and above all diverse. If you like designing but don't have much space, alpines are a perfect set of plants to experiment with creative combinations. Spring is a great time to plant an alpine trough. Fill it with a mix of equal parts of horticultural sand, gravel and potting compost. Plant with a selection of alpines such as phlox, sempervivums, small sedums and alpine saxifrages.

Plant a perennial meadow

A successful meadow border will come from a mix of plant groups and will delight each year. Think less about planting as individuals and more as a plant community. Consider how the plants interact and relate to one another. You can also underplant with bulbs for interest early in the year. Try a combination of primulas, euphorbia and then add geums and heucheras. Grasses, kniphofia leaves and fennel will add height and structure, whilst rudbeckia and ratibida will shine in summer.



What to do in the garden now

- Create a little spring garden with pots and containers.
- Prune, deadhead and rescue.
- Clean and revamp pots.
- Loosen up the soil in your vegetable garden.
- Rake the grass.
- Start seeds indoors.
- Divide overcrowded perennials.
- Clean and repair the greenhouse.
- Clean your garden furniture.
- Mulch garden beds with organic matter such as compost or well-rotted manure.
- Plant new trees, shrubs and perennials. You can also start sowing seeds directly in the ground for annual flowers and vegetables.

Grow it, eat it!

Shallot sets are available in spring in garden centres. They are usually planted in from mid-March to mid-April. Once rooted in, they don't generally need watering except in prolonged dry spells. Try to avoid wetting the bulbs or foliage as this can encourage fungal diseases. Shallots usually ripen in mid- to late summer, depending on the variety, planting time and weather conditions.





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WINDOW BOXES

If you are looking for a simple, but effective way to add visual interest to your home, window boxes are the perfect way to bring some seasonal colour to your facade. You don't need many plants to fill them, yet they still make a substantial impact.



WHETHER YOU'RE A GARDENING NOVICE OR MORE GREEN-FINGERED, WINDOW BOXES ALLOW YOU TO EXPERIMENT WITH DIFFERENT PLANTS AND COMPOSITIONS.

Whether you're a gardening novice or more green-fingered, window boxes allow you to experiment with different plants and compositions.

When considering window box ideas, look for those that incorporate a variety of colours and textures by mixing flowers with other leafy plants.

When arranging plants in a window box, you'll want to check the labels of plants to see how tall they will grow and place the tallest at the back and the shortest at the front, for good balance. This will give you a shapely and fuller-looking display and will ensure all the plants get a good dose of sunlight.



COTTAGECORE

Window boxes immediately evoke that feeling of cottage charm, so if you're looking for cottage garden ideas or want to embrace the cottagecore trend outdoors, a cottage-inspired window box is a great way to go about it.





FRUIT AND VEG

Many of us will have space for a window box on one of the windows that looks into our kitchen. So, why not extend your kitchen outdoors by creating a space to grow your very own produce?



SEASONAL PICKS

You can go seasonal with your choices. That will mean that you need to replant your box several times throughout the year, but doing so will allow you to celebrate each new season.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!

If you're looking for a low-maintenance window box idea and something a bit different, consider using succulents. While there are a few care mistakes to avoid, you'll also need to make sure your planters have good drainage and that you're choosing hardier succulents to ensure they thrive outside.



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FEED THE FIRE!

North Outdoor Living and BBQ are the premier outdoor kitchen and BBQ shop in Kent, where value meets style.

North Outdoor Living provide customers with a wide selection of integrated solutions for gas and charcoal BBQs; wood, gas and charcoal fired outdoor ovens; open fire cooking equipment and a range of outdoor kitchens and associated products.

Their brands are carefully selected and many products are developed with manufacturers to allow integration across brands for cooking devices, kitchen units and outdoor appliances. They pride themselves on stocking a high proportion of British brands and support sustainable suppliers and products.

Their customers look for the latest in home styling trends and they are able to provide the latest in outdoor living and cooking. They have options to suit all budgets and a selection you just can't find anywhere else in the UK.

They are an owner operator family business built on decades of knowledge in the sector and relationships with all the major and noteworthy brands and suppliers. They work directly with customers, architects, landscapers and garden designers to achieve the specific customer requirements in both off-the-shelf and custom-built and designed solutions.

North Outdoor Living and BBQ is a unique business in so much as no other business in the south-east, or possibly further afield, carries the same range and selection of brands and equipment.

In BBQs they carry gas-fired units from Napoleon and Beefeater; in charcoal-fired units they are authorised dealers for Kamado Joe,

Masterbuilt, ProQ, Napoleon and Blok Customs.

For live fire cooking they have a number of British brands and can supply off-the-shelf units or custom built units including their own compact asado grill units. Brands include Blok, Ox Grills and Flammery.

In outdoor ovens they stock gas and wood fired ovens from Gozney and DeliVita plus British made Charlie Charcoal ovens.

Specific outdoor living brand lines include RB73 outdoor stoves and again British-made Morville bioclimatic pergolas and canopies.

Outdoor kitchens are their core product area and they have developed some unique brand relationships to offer the customer both individuality and a range of options for both budget and finishes. They offer British-made options from Vlaze finished in vitreous enamel and Warrington & Rose constructed from micro-reinforced concrete. Minimalistic design is provided by their UK exclusive Danish brand Norrvik where they have pre-configured options and colours and a range of worktop finishes. The outdoor kitchen brands for 2025 are completed by Whistler and Napoleon who offer pre-configured units to provide a wide range of options in a quality, yet more budget-friendly solution.

Integration between bbqs and cooking equipment and the range of outdoor kitchens is paramount and they offer detailed specifications and designs where required.

In the showroom they offer a large selection of Yeti drinkware, coolers and other accessories along with a range of rubs and sauces from a

wide selection of British and some independent brands well known in the bbq world. Other bbq needs are covered from their wide selection of British produced sustainable woods and charcoals

They have recently moved into a new showroom which provides areas for BBQs and accessories displayed by brands, Yeti coolers and drinkware, then an outdoor living area for pergolas, outdoor stoves and outdoor kitchens.

They look forward to welcoming you to the new showroom in Aylesford and/or your attendance to one of their demonstrations to see the full selection of products in action with product launches from March onwards in 2025.



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LOVELY LAVENDER

Not many things beat the brilliance of an indigo lavender hedge humming with bees and bestowing its heavenly scent under the high sun of mid-summer.



THE TWO MOST POPULAR VARIETIES TO GROW IN THE UK
ARE LAVENDULA ANGUSTIFOLIA HIDCOTE AND MUNSTEAD.

Poets and playwrights alike have referenced its beauty over the centuries and it has become known as a stalwart of the English country garden. But

what do we know about lavender and how do we grow and look after it?

The Romans brought lavender to our shores from its native growing sites in the Mediterranean, southern Europe, North Africa and Asia. It is part of the mint family and was traditionally used as an antiseptic and to deter pests and fleas. Ancient Indian scripts refer to its use as a cooling herb to relax the mind and aid sleep.

By the Middle Ages in Britain its healing virtues were heralded and it was strewn about floors to release its scent as people walked over it and used in the washing of clothes to clean and disinfect.

During the late 18th and 19th century commercial lavender farms sprung up in southern England where warmer temperatures and lower rainfall suited the plants. Competition from French lavender meant that many of these farms closed during the 20th century. However in recent years they have seen a revival and today there are many farms in Surrey, Suffolk, the Cotswolds and Kent.





THE SECRETS TO GROWING LAVENDER:

Hailing originally from warm shores and sandy soils means that lavender plants love to be planted in the sunniest part of the garden, south or south west facing in a light, fairly impoverished soil. So if you have heavy clay soil consider planting in raised beds and incorporating horticultural grit and sharp sand into the soil. The soil needs to be free draining, so a mix of 1/3 soil, 1/3 grit and 1/3 sand is good.

If you buy plants to put in the garden, plant from May when the soil is warming up or if you have seeds sow in pots or trays of sandy soil under glass or inside from March. They need light to germinate so only very lightly cover the seeds with the potting mix. Germination will be sporadic and between 14 and 30 days. Keep moist during this time but not waterlogged. The seedlings can be potted on and ready to acclimatise outside from 12 weeks after germination.

Lavender is drought tolerant once established, so water 2-3 times a week during the plant's first Spring and Summer unless it has rained, no more than this.

The two most popular varieties to grow in the UK are *Lavendula angustifolia* Hidcote and Munstead. Both are named after the world-famous gardens where their varieties were first introduced. Both are long flowering, hardy and highly fragrant. My favourites are newer sterile cultivars Grosso and Phenomenal. Both grow large and are great for hedges or flanking paths. They have good silver colour to their foliage so are a welcome sight in the border through the winter when the low, pale sunlight catches the metallic foliage and breaks up the fawn and sand colours of the deciduous winter garden.

Grow lavender with other plants that enjoy the same conditions. Some of my favourites to combine with are *Gaura lindheimeri*, *Erigeron karvinskianus*, *Perovskia*, *Salvia* (many



varieties), Common Sage, Alliums, Nepeta and ornamental grasses Pennisetum and Stipa tenuissima.

Pruning is key to the longevity of your plants. It's very important to prune lavender hard after flowering every year. You can use the cuttings in many ways and the fragrance is heavenly. August until mid-September is the time to do it after the flower spikes have started to dry on the plant. Lavender doesn't grow from old wood so prune back all new growth to 2-3cm from the woody structure of the plant.

Do this every year to prevent the plant from becoming too large and woody and protect it from wind and frost damage. If you forget to do it at the end of the summer don't prune during autumn or winter, wait until March and give it a lighter trim and then give it a harder prune in August after flowering. Secateurs or shears are all you need and something to gather all the cuttings into.

Many lavender growers welcome visitors.

The national collection is held by Norfolk Lavender. They have over 100 varieties. (norfolk-lavender.co.uk).

Castle Farm is a family farm near Shoreham in west Kent. The family have been farming here since 1892 when James Alexander brought down 17 milking cows on the train from Scotland. They are now the largest lavender farm in the UK. (castlefarmkent.co.uk).

Mayfield Lavender in Banstead, Surrey is on one of the original Victorian lavender growing sites. They sell many products made from their own lavender as well as plants and seeds. (mayfieldlavender.com).

If you would like to discuss how you may use lavender in your garden or talk about a garden design I would love to hear from you.

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DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS? Feel free to check out our FAQs on our website or ask a member of our team for more info.

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Victoria Atkinson, SCULPTOR

Victoria Atkinson is a sculptor who finds life in stillness, presence in the unspoken, and depth in the undefined. With an artistic career spanning decades, her work captures the essence of human existence through form, texture, and emotion.

From life-size statues of literary giants to intimate, abstracted figures that dance between reality and mythology, Atkinson's sculptures stand as guardians of time, memory, and soul.

Victoria's artistic journey began at the City and Guilds of London Art School in the late 1980s, where she studied sculpture with a strong emphasis on classical training in life drawing and modelling. Since then, she has become a recognized force in contemporary sculpture, earning commissions for notable bronze portraits, including a life-size statue of Rudyard Kipling that now graces Burwash High Street. In 2022, she was one of four sculptors selected to create a maquette of Aphra Behn for Canterbury, a project highlighting her ability to blend historical reverence with a fresh, emotive perspective. Her work has been exhibited extensively, from the Society of Portrait Sculptors to the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition and the Royal West of England Academy, where she is an Artists' Network member. In October 2023, her dedication to the craft was recognized with election to the Royal Society of Sculptors.

Atkinson's sculptures speak in whispers rather than shouts. Whether working in wet clay or plaster, she distils movement and emotion down to their bare essentials. She

embraces a painterly approach, allowing drawn lines to remain visible in the clay, hinting at the fluid process beneath the hardened surface. Her pieces possess an elemental quality – figures seem to rise from the earth, reflecting an ancient connection to monoliths and stone circles. "I am fascinated by monoliths," she explains. "There is a sense of perpetual time and the feeling that something so still can evoke so much power."



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Angel Gossip bronze 78, 26x30x15cm inc. base



Gabriel bronze 58 25x9x9cm



Her work, though often abstracted, remains deeply human. Rather than pursuing hyper-realistic likenesses, Atkinson's focus is on capturing the mood or essence of her subjects through posture and gesture. Many of her figures are androgynous, transcending gender and race to communicate universal experiences. "The work I do always features people, but I'm more interested in the feeling, the soul of a person rather than creating an exact likeness," she says. This philosophy extends to one of her recurring themes – the presence of guardians, watchers, or keepers, figures that quietly observe and protect.

Mythology is another powerful influence on her work. Inspired by Greek myths, she is drawn to the humanity of gods and heroes – beings who are flawed, emotional, and as susceptible to desire and jealousy as the rest

of us. Her figures, though often static, possess a silent presence that resonates deeply. "I'm always intrigued by shadows or ghost images of somebody. When you close your eyes, features of a face or posture often don't emerge, but the 'essence' of somebody does."

For those eager to experience Atkinson's evocative work firsthand, seven of her sculptures will be exhibited at the Fairfax Gallery's Spring Exhibition, opening on March 23rd. The sculpture for homes or gardens will be available for purchase.

EXHIBITION DETAILS:

Fairfax Gallery,
23 The Pantiles,
Tunbridge Wells
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fairfaxgallery.com

A beginner's guide to BUYING ART



mindtheg.com

Building an art collection is a fulfilling and dynamic journey. Art dealers and galleries play a crucial role in connecting collectors with artists and artworks.

DISPLAYING YOUR ART

Art should be experienced daily, not locked away in storage. How you display your collection can greatly impact your enjoyment.

Consider these aspects:

Wall space: Choose the right walls in your home to showcase your art. Ensure adequate lighting to highlight the pieces effectively.

Framing: Invest in high-quality framing to protect and enhance your artworks. Different styles of frames can complement various art genres.

Rotation: Don't be afraid to rotate your collection. Swapping out artworks periodically can bring a fresh perspective to your space.

Curating themes: Create themed displays to highlight specific aspects of your collection. This can add depth and narrative to your art presentation.

VISIT GALLERIES AND MUSEUMS

Exploring galleries and museums is an excellent way to expose yourself to a wide range of artistic styles and genres. Take note of the artworks that capture your attention and evoke emotions. Pay attention to the artists whose work resonates with you.

ONLINE RESEARCH

The internet offers a wealth of resources for art exploration. Browse art websites, social media platforms, and online art communities to discover emerging artists and art trends.

Follow artists whose work intrigues you and engage in discussions about their creations.

SEEK INSPIRATION IN YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Inspiration can often be found in your daily surroundings. Pay attention to the art and design elements that resonate with you in your home, workplace, or community. These preferences can offer valuable insights into your artistic tastes.

By taking the time to explore your artistic preferences, you'll gain clarity on the types of art that resonate with you emotionally and visually. This self-discovery process will serve as a strong foundation as you embark on your journey as an art buyer.

CAN I ASK FOR A DISCOUNT WHEN BUYING FINE ART?

Often artists and galleries are willing to give a discount on the purchase of multiple pieces of art. And some will provide a slight discount on a single large work if requested.

Please be aware that few artists or galleries outside of the art world stratosphere are getting rich selling artwork. Buying fine art is not about getting a great deal. It's about paying a fair price for the artist's work as well as that of the gallery: paying rent, exhibition costs, promotion expenses, supply costs, and all the behind-the-scenes expenses of a business.

DON'T THINK OF ART AS A FINANCIAL INVESTMENT

A painting is more of an investment of the heart, not of the purse. In terms of your budget, go to a reputable dealer. If you love it, find a way to buy it, because otherwise you'll spend your life regretting it.



REFLECT YOUR INTERESTS

Buying fine art starts with you and what you like. If you're a novice, you may only have a vague idea of what kind of artwork you like and what will look well in your home. The best way to narrow down your criteria is to do some browsing. Buy what you love, not what goes with your sofa!

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A SPLASH OF COLOUR

Colour can transform your home like nothing else. It can enhance, lift and complement your space – or it can drag it down, making your rooms feel small, drab and lifeless.



CONSIDER NATURAL LIGHT

Always take into consideration the natural light in your room, as this will have a big influence on the overall ambience. For poorly lit or north-facing rooms, consider warmer-based colours with an underlying red or yellow tone, or embrace the limitations and go dark. South-facing rooms are full of natural light, so nearly any colour will work. East-facing rooms get the morning light, so are a little cooler and therefore work well with soft pale aquas and blues, while west-facing rooms get the light later in the day, so will love dusky pinks.

ADD ARTWORK

The easy way to introduce colour is through paint and artwork but, to create a real point of

difference, think outside the box. Turn to the everyday and the overlooked.

COLOURFUL JOINERY

Coloured joinery will make a statement, but if you want a more muted look, pare back the tones and you won't feel as if the shelving is screaming for attention. Consider adding a touch of colour to the internal sides of your cabinetry to create a talking point.

RUG UP

The vast majority of rugs purchased these days are neutrals, but why not splash out on a daring print or a colour-blocked rug.

An over-dyed Persian rug in cobalt blue or hot pink will definitely make a statement. It's an easy fix and safe as it's not a permanent fixture.



sonyawinner.com



BEDROOM BEAUTY

Bedrooms are perfect to go wild in, particularly with bold colour choices.

The fact you can close off the room when guests are over allows you to splash out with a bespoke bedhead or a vibrant painted window frame.

Make sure you repeat the colour to an extent (it doesn't have to be exact) in another element in the room, as this will tie the two (or even more) things together for a cohesive look.

farrow-ball.com

WALLPAPER MAGIC

Create a serene, dreamlike ambiance in your interior with this hand-painted panoramic wallpaper mural. Soft opal tones, delicate golds, and whispers of lavender evoke the ethereal beauty of a misty morning garden. This textured wall covering holds a calming sense of elegance and depth.



BE BOLD

Now if you feel bold, go nuts – you won't be disappointed. Splashing out on a teal velvet sofa or colour-blocking your living room is a sure-fire way to give your home that designer edge.

Create moody spaces by painting floors, walls, ceilings and frames in dark tones then lifting the spaces with statement prints, vivid colour and quirky elements.



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PICTURE AND DADO RAILS

There is a certain charm to picture and dado rails, although these practical design features that once adorned Victorian homes, are rarely found in modern properties. But picture rails and other decorative wall mouldings are becoming increasingly on-trend.

Dado and picture rails are simple additions that really enhance a room and instantly add character. Picture rails first became common around the early 1800s and were mounted either about 40cm below the ceiling cornice, or at the same height as the top of the windows or doors. Dado rails originally came about in the Georgian era, when dining chairs were put away from the table when not in use. The wooden dado rail, fixed at around 120cm from the floor, was to protect the wall from being

knocked by furniture. Today, while we tend not to use picture rails for our wall art and dado rails serve no practical purpose, both are good ways to make a decorative statement and provide opportunities to use bold colour, wallpaper or panelling either above or below them.

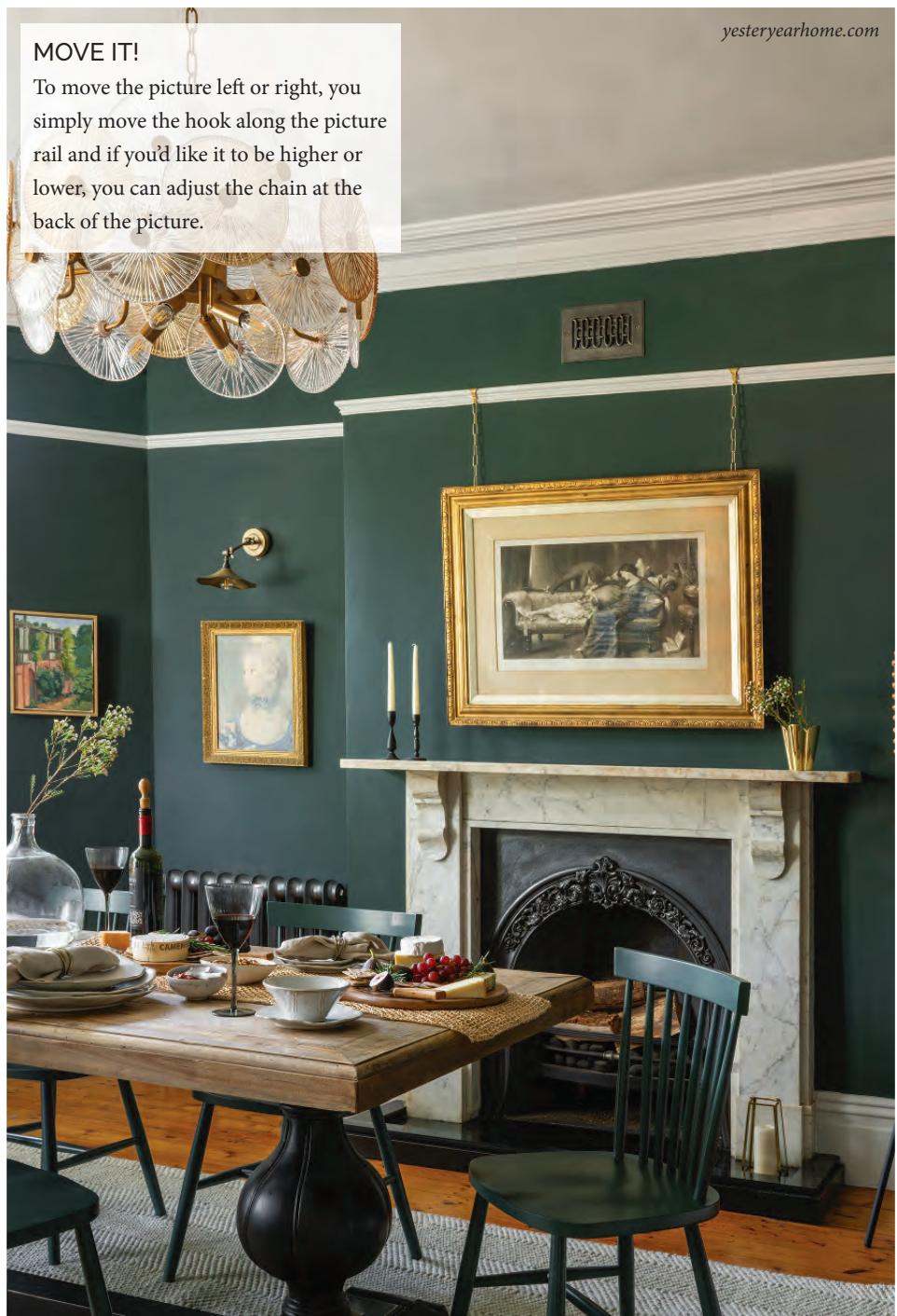
Consider fixing dado rails slightly lower than they would have been originally, as this makes the ceiling look higher. Take your guide from the ceiling height – there's no set rule, but if you live in a period property and the dado has been removed, look for bumps in the plasterwork.



paintandpaperlibrary.com

MOVE IT!

To move the picture left or right, you simply move the hook along the picture rail and if you'd like it to be higher or lower, you can adjust the chain at the back of the picture.



ADD SOME CHARACTER

A dado rail, also known as a chair rail, is a decorative moulding traditionally installed on the walls of homes and buildings. Its primary purpose was once functional, protecting walls from the wear and tear caused by furniture. Over time, dado rails have evolved to serve a more aesthetic purpose, adding charm and character to interiors.



mindtheg.com

PICTURE THIS!

A picture rail is not just a decorative moulding, it has a very specific purpose and, just as the name suggests, it is used to hang pictures from. It is a great alternative to drilling holes in the wall and it makes moving pictures very simple.



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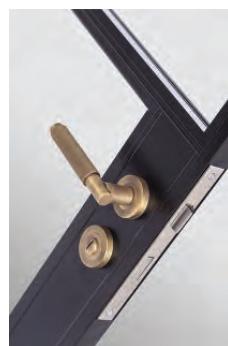


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EDWARDIAN ELEGANCE

This was an era that celebrated a new uncluttered and simple approach to design, and one that most of all rejoiced in letting in the sunlight!





We continue with our series of guides to Period Property, to help you easily identify key features and architectural styles. Having previously covered the Victorian period, it's now time to focus on a relatively much shorter era, but one that comes as a refreshing change from the stuffiness of the Victorians, that ushered in a lighter and less cluttered architectural style, a new era: we're looking at how to recognise an Edwardian house.

Officially the Edwardian era lasted from 1901 to the death of Edward VII in 1910, however it's commonly accepted that the influence of the new style continued until at least the beginning of the 1920s. It was a reaction to the previous century's obsession with privacy, morality and social duty, which meant Victorian houses were dark, over-filled and cluttered. They had squeezed in as many rooms as possible, aimed at segregating adults, children and servants, which resulted in small, gloomy, claustrophobic and probably unhealthy spaces.

The Edwardians reacted against this, with health and hygiene becoming paramount. Light, comfort and larger informal rooms reflected the more relaxed attitudes. It became fashionable to move out of the over-crowded, inner-city areas. Those who could afford to, namely the new middle classes, moved to newly developed suburbs, which was made possible by improved transport systems. There was more space on the outskirts, so houses were designed to be larger, more comfortable and had gardens, which tied in nicely with the new healthy lifestyle. They were also set back from the road, with generous front gardens to give the occupants more privacy.

Compared with the previous century, a typical Edwardian property must have seemed

almost palatial, with a spacious hall, living or reception rooms, kitchen, bathroom and four or more bedrooms. This additional space was now available, as quarters for live-in servants were no longer required. Of all our period homes, the Edwardian style is one of the most popular for present-day house buyers to invest in. Many have been snapped up, as purchasers recognise the potential for these beautiful houses to be renovated into fabulous finished projects that epitomise a blend of old and new styles.

KEY FEATURES OF THE EDWARDIAN HOUSE

External

Red brickwork was a popular choice; however, some grander properties were part-timbered in a mock Tudor style on the top part of the house. The roof tended to be very steep-pitched and tiled, with dormer windows providing light for rooms in the roof space. Other features included bargeboards and wooden framed porches. Many of these may sound very similar to a description of a Victorian house, but there was a more generous, less fussy elegance to Edwardian design, which was influenced by the Arts and Crafts movement which had a philosophy of only using beautiful, handmade and simple design.

Windows

One of the most important elements for the new Edwardian style of living, as previously mentioned, was the recognition that light was beneficial. To this end, windows of this period were larger to let in as much light as possible, to create light airy spaces. The design of the windows was very similar to Victorian sash or casement windows; however, they were generally larger, with narrower frames, sometimes featuring beautiful Art Nouveau inspired designs and coloured stained glass.



@carolinebriggs

Front doors

As Edwardian houses were generally more generous size-wise, the hallways were often bigger and wider to suit. As a result, there was space to really 'go to town' on the main entrance to the property with a substantial front door, with carved panels, often featuring stained glass to let in the glorious coloured light. In addition to this, even more light could be allowed into the hallway by having glazed overhead toplights and sidelights. These were simply extra windows over the top of the door and at both sides to maximise illumination from natural light and, of course, to make a style statement. On the outside a wide, deep, ornately-carved wooden porch would surround the entrance.

Internal

It is no surprise that these more generously proportioned Edwardian houses had large rooms with high ceilings. The main living room may well have had more than one window. These days we rattle off the phrase 'dual aspect' as a much-coveted feature of a room; however, this was a real innovation for the fashionable Edwardian homeowner, very much in contrast to the claustrophobic, light-starved rooms of the previous era. This was luxurious modern living!

Decorative mouldings, dado and picture rails

The popularity of wall and other mouldings previously adopted by the Victorians continued into the Edwardian period. The dado, or chair rail, was not only used for aesthetic reasons, but also helped protect the walls from damage from furniture scrapes. Similarly, skirting boards also helped protect the walls and were handy for disguising unsightly gaps or untidy bits of floor.

Picture rails were often mounted on the walls in line with the top of the door frames, with the addition of a decorative frieze above as a modern

and stylish way of adding some colour and individuality to a reception room. One feature that began to fall out of fashion was the ceiling rose. Did you know these were originally used to hide smoke stains from candles and gaslights? As electricity became the means to illuminate homes through the 1900s, they were no longer fashionable or desired.

Fireplace

The all-important main focal point of reception or living rooms was still of course the fireplace. However, the ostentatious and over-elaborate fireplaces of the previous century, made from marble or fake marble (enamelled slate) with flamboyant decoration, were chucked out in favour of simpler and cheaper ones made from carved wood. Another method of producing a similar result was to make cast iron fireplaces, which could be even cheaper. These could be brought up to date with a fashionable large mirror as the 'over-mantle', great for reflecting all the extra sunlight the Edwardians were so keen on!

Flooring

Hygiene and a new healthy lifestyle, as previously mentioned, were priorities for the Edwardians. To this end one of the most popular types of flooring were ceramic tiles, which were nice and easy to clean, and great for decorative style statements for the hallway. Mosaics, although very desirable, could be pricey.

Wooden floors were also popular, but still expensive. It was fashionable to have the edges of the room tiled for easy cleaning, with the central area covered with an Oriental rug. However, there were some much cheaper hacks employed by the Edwardians. Lino, or linoleum flooring, had been invented and could be a reasonable imitation of the more expensive versions of flooring. It was also hard-wearing and easy to clean.



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FURNITURE WITH A STORY

Love furniture with a story? Family business Clarks Furniture upcycles interesting pieces that add character to your space

Clarks Furniture started trading at Greenwich Market 10 years ago selling vintage furniture and collectables. Alongside the market, Clarks has a strong online presence on both Instagram and Facebook.

Clarks also make rustic furniture which is made from reclaimed materials, such as 100 year old roof joists which have been salvaged from demolished buildings or those which have undergone refurbishment.

Three years ago Clarks opened their first shop in Southborough Lane, Bromley. When the lease came to an end they were able to open a much larger shop in Petts Wood, Orpington. The shop is run by Michelle who is happy to offer advice on pieces of furniture, colours or styles for your home. It's stocked with many pieces of upcycled furniture and lots of pieces of handmade rustic furniture which is made to order by Michelle's husband Tony.





The shop also has a large garden with lots of reclaimed pieces, including old and new garden statues and ornaments. There are also pieces of homeware including mirrors and decorative pieces.

The shop is open Tuesday to Saturday, 9.30am – 5.30pm . They source items of vintage furniture which are sometimes not fit for purpose and upcycle them so they are ready to go into any home environment.

Clarks also offer a painting service for customers' furniture so that any outdated pieces can be given an update.



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SPLASHING OUT

Gone are the days when the purpose of a splashback was purely practical. Today, the wide choice of different materials, colours and finishes means your splashback can become a statement piece.

It can even become the focal point of your kitchen.

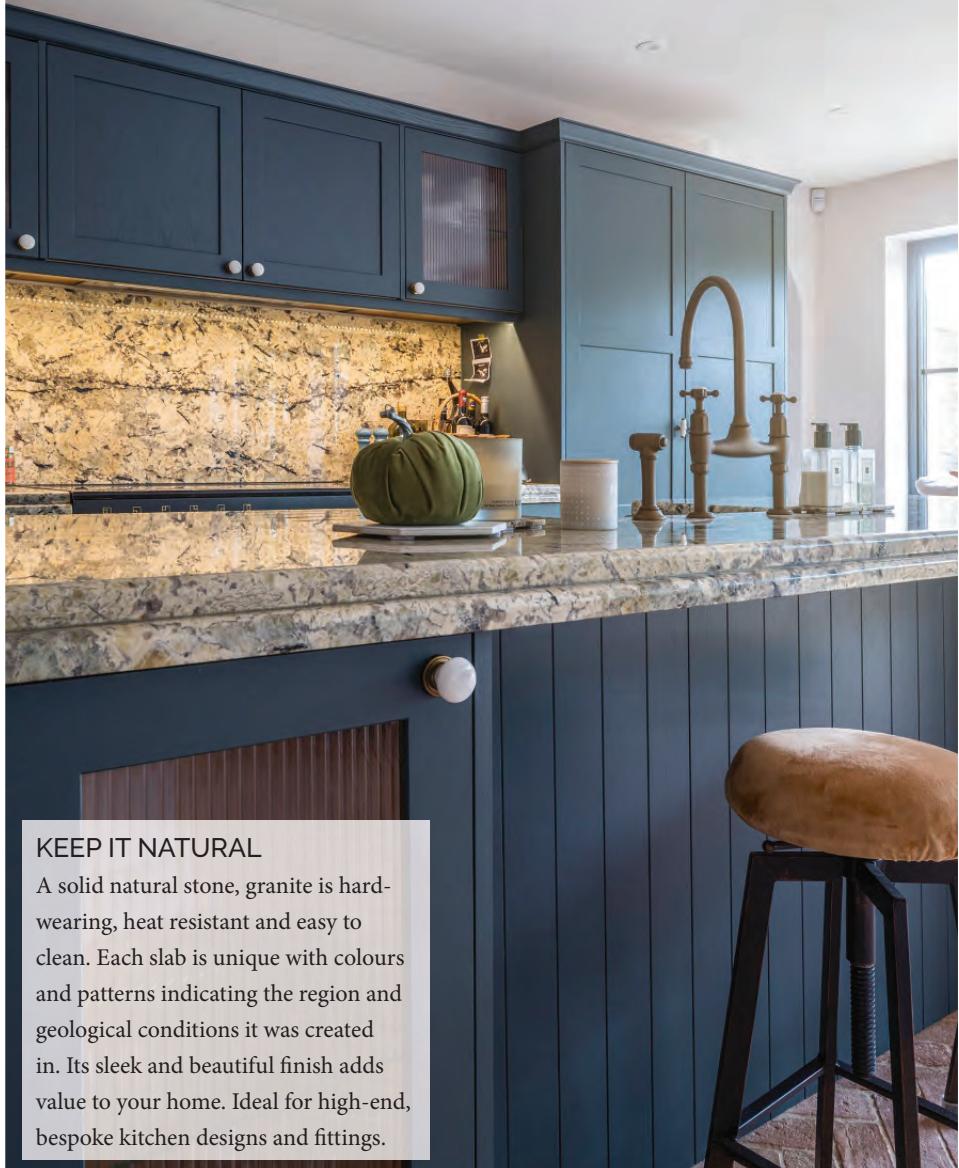


AS GOOD AS GOLD

With a bit of gold leaf you can turn a tired looking kitchen into one that has a dramatic focal wall. You will need to seal the gold leaf after application, there are lacquers that can be painted on top, or, you can use a clear piece of glass.

So you've finally settled on a door style for your kitchen cabinets, chosen a colour and committed to a style of hardware. Now it's time to dress the walls with a splashback.

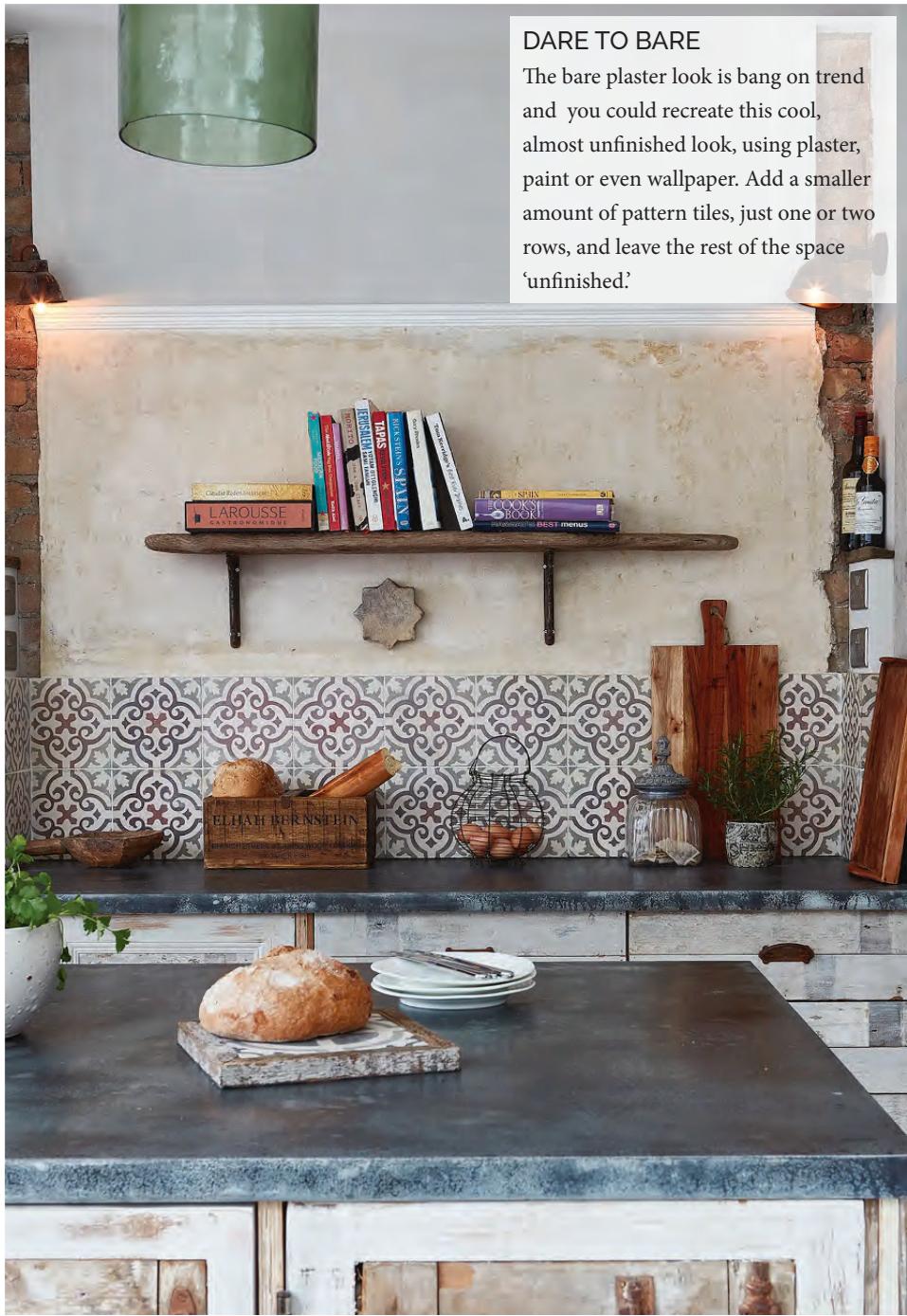
A kitchen splashback that is fit for purpose around a wall-facing sink and cooker will protect the surrounds from grease and water. But do you opt for a bold, glossy tile? Or a mesmerising marble?



KEEP IT NATURAL

A solid natural stone, granite is hard-wearing, heat resistant and easy to clean. Each slab is unique with colours and patterns indicating the region and geological conditions it was created in. Its sleek and beautiful finish adds value to your home. Ideal for high-end, bespoke kitchen designs and fittings.

Kitchen: hogwoodhouse.co.uk



DARE TO BARE

The bare plaster look is bang on trend and you could recreate this cool, almost unfinished look, using plaster, paint or even wallpaper. Add a smaller amount of pattern tiles, just one or two rows, and leave the rest of the space 'unfinished.'

There's plenty on offer in terms of splashback materials. Cost, care requirements and how they complement the rest of the kitchen design should all factor into your selection.

STAINLESS STEEL

Stainless steel has an industrial look, and is easy to look after. It is resistant to heat and hardwearing. Easy to clean and hygienic, it is commonly used in professional kitchens. Stainless steel splashbacks can work well if you like the industrial vibe.

QUARTZ

Quartz is a popular choice for countertops and splashbacks – strong, hard wearing, heat resistant and luxurious. There is a huge range of colours and patterns available.

GLASS

Glass is a stylish solution giving a streamlined look to the kitchen. There is a wide choice of colours and effects to choose from. With a glossy, high-polish finish, these splashbacks are made from toughened glass which makes them impact and heat resistant.



sheet-metal-online.co.uk



THE POLISHED LOOK

Terrazzo kitchen splashbacks make an ideal choice for any space. They will bring a timeless quality to your home. Plus, thanks to their natural stone make-up, they are also a highly heat resistant, scratch resistant and durable choice.



rearo.co.uk

MARBLE

Marble splashbacks – especially slabs featuring dramatic veining – double as a piece of refined art. What's more, the classic, statement-making stone works just as well in sleek, modern spaces as it does in traditional kitchens.

PORCELAIN AND CERAMIC TILES

Tiles are heat, scratch and water-resistant. There is a huge choice of colours, sizes and patterns available from white, subway tiles to hand-made rustic, Moorish style.

You can mix and match plain and patterned tiles to create a statement piece. Tiles are a cost-effective option and easier to install than most other materials.



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HARD CHOICES

A well-designed driveway, stylish paving and an inviting patio can transform the exterior of any home, boosting kerb appeal and adding value.

Whether you're looking for a classic aesthetic, a modern minimalist look or a rustic charm, selecting the right materials and designs is essential.



BLOCK IT OUT

A timeless choice, block paving is made from concrete or clay bricks arranged in intricate patterns. Available in a variety of colours, shapes and textures, block paving is both versatile and durable. It allows for easy repairs, since individual blocks can be replaced if damaged. Popular patterns include herringbone, basketweave and stretcher bond, each offering a unique visual effect.

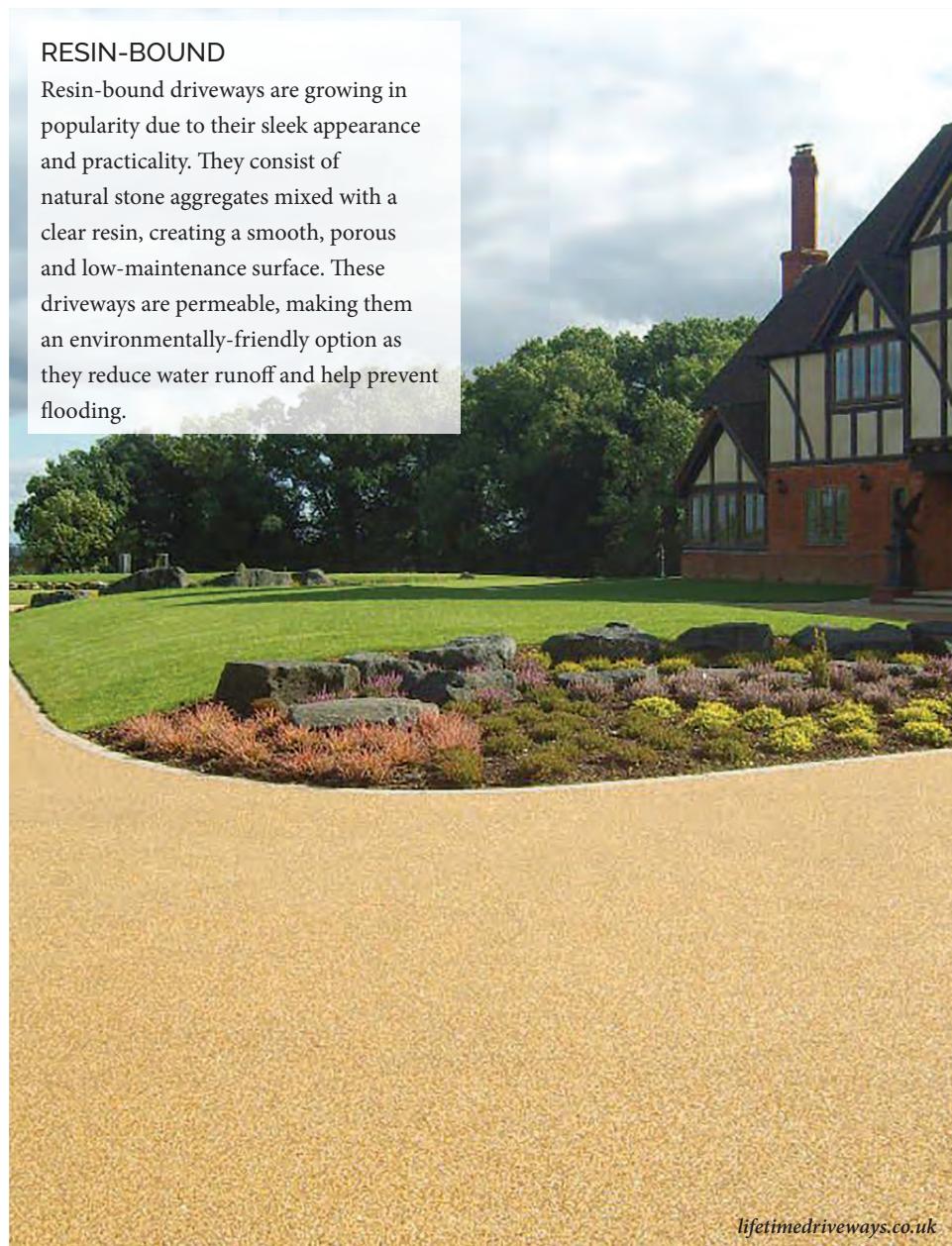


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Your driveway is the gateway to your home, setting the tone for the rest of your property. It needs to be functional, durable and aesthetically pleasing. Several materials stand out for their combination of style and longevity:

RESIN-BOUND

Resin-bound driveways are growing in popularity due to their sleek appearance and practicality. They consist of natural stone aggregates mixed with a clear resin, creating a smooth, porous and low-maintenance surface. These driveways are permeable, making them an environmentally-friendly option as they reduce water runoff and help prevent flooding.



lifetimedriveways.co.uk

PATIOS: CREATING AN OUTDOOR LIVING SPACE

A well-designed patio extends your living space into the outdoors, offering an area for relaxation, dining and entertaining. Choosing the right materials and design is key to achieving both function and aesthetic.



BACK TO NATURE

For a natural and 'rustic' appeal, natural stone paving is a fantastic choice. Materials such as sandstone, limestone, slate and granite offer unique textures and colours. Natural stone ages beautifully and blends well with different landscaping styles.

Limestone parquet, thepatiowarehouse.co.uk



FLAGSTONES

Flagstone patios offer a natural and rustic charm, with irregularly-shaped stones creating a unique pattern. These stones come in a variety of colours, from earthy browns to cool greys, and their textured surface provides a non-slip advantage.



BRICK PAVING

Brick paving provides a classic and warm aesthetic that complements traditional and contemporary homes alike. The durability of clay bricks makes them a long-lasting solution, and their natural colour doesn't fade over time.



CERAMIC TILES

Traditional ceramic floor tiles can be an acceptable choice for outdoor patios. They are made from clay fired at high temperatures and glazed to create a hard surface layer. Generally speaking, though, ceramic tile is best suited for light-use patios, since it will not be as strong as other choices.

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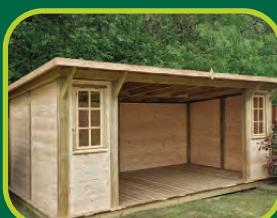
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How to avoid making mincemeat of estate planning



A will that was hand-written on the back of two cardboard food packages has been confirmed as legally binding by the High Court.

In an unusual twist, Malcolm Chenery used a Young's frozen fish box and a Mr Kipling mince pie box to set out his wishes, leaving his £180,000 estate – including a three-bedroom house, jewellery, and a pottery collection – to the charity Diabetes UK. Despite the unconventional medium and the two pieces of card not being physically connected, the court upheld the will.

Under English law, a will is valid if it complies with the Wills Act 1837, which requires it to be in writing, signed by the person making it, and witnessed by two independent individuals present at the same time.

“While this case highlights that a will doesn’t

have to follow a traditional format to stand in court, unconventional approaches often lead to unnecessary stress and costs for executors and beneficiaries,” said Sam Corse, Tax and Estate Planning expert with Whitehead Monckton Solicitors. “Even with the family supporting the charitable donation, this case caused additional complications.”

Simple preparation can avoid such confusion. One important step is to organise financial documents and to create a clear list of assets, which should be kept in a place known to the executors and kept up to date. “Executors must obtain valuations for all your assets – whether property, crypto currency, premium bonds,

or pottery collections like Mr Chenery's," explained Sam. "Providing account details in advance can save time and stress."

Delay in sending information about assets to HM Revenue and Customs following a death can have serious financial consequences. Executors are personally accountable for handling estates correctly, including paying inheritance tax (IHT) on time. IHT is due within six months of the month of death, with HMRC charging 7.5% interest (current rates) after that time. Delays can result in penalties and mounting costs, which beneficiaries might expect executors to cover from their own funds.

Executors must also act within two years to claim some of the tax-free allowances for married couples or civil partners, who may be able to combine allowances to pass up to £1 million tax-free. Missing this deadline can reduce the inheritance beneficiaries receive.

While the exemption for gifts between spouses is 'absolute' and does not have to be claimed, the transferred nil rate band does have to be claimed, and this is where the two year time limit applies.

"Think of estate planning as a gift to your loved ones," added Sam. "Potentially discussing your plans with family – whether they're included or excluded (in some certain circumstances) – can help avoid disputes and ensure your legacy is handled smoothly. Attention to detail now can make a world of difference later."

Draft a clear, valid will

Ensure your will complies with all legal requirements and reflects your wishes clearly. Anything that could lead to disputes should be checked and ideally discussed with those involved. Consider consulting a solicitor to ensure all bases are covered.

Store your will securely

Keep your will in a safe but accessible place and inform your executors where it is stored. Options include a solicitor's office, a bank's safe deposit box, or a registered will storage service. Avoid storing it in a place that could be overlooked or difficult to access.

Review and update regularly

Life events – such as marriage, divorce, the birth of children, or a significant change in assets – can affect the validity or relevance of your will. Regularly reviewing your will ensures it remains aligned with your current wishes.

Consider your digital assets

In today's digital age, estate planning must include online accounts, digital assets, and even social media profiles. Leave instructions for accessing important accounts and consider appointing a digital executor if necessary.

Plan for taxes

While the tax-free threshold for inheritance tax (IHT) is £325,000 in the UK, estates exceeding this may be liable for significant tax payments. Proper estate planning can help mitigate IHT liabilities, for instance, by using exemptions, gifts, or trusts effectively.

Communicate with executors and beneficiaries
Discussing your plans with all involved reduces misunderstandings and surprises later. Executors should understand their responsibilities, and beneficiaries should be aware of your intentions to help manage expectations.

**To find out how we can help call us on 01622 698000
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A classic combo of smoked fish, cream and dill. Serve with plenty of cracked black pepper and a glass of chilled white wine.

VAN LIFE

Chef Danny Jack and his wife Hailee Kukura have travelled around the UK and USA in their self-build campervan, rediscovering the simple pleasures of a life spent in the great outdoors. In this book they have captured their passions for adventure and good food and distilled them into over 80 campervan-friendly dishes.

SERVES
2

YOU WILL NEED

- 1 courgette
- 1 tbsp olive oil, plus an extra splash
- 2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1/2 banana shallot or small onion, thinly sliced
- 250g dried tagliatelle, spaghetti or fettuccine
- 50ml white wine (optional)
- 300ml double cream (dairy or plant based)
- 1/2 small bunch of dill, stalks finely chopped
- 300g skinless hot or cold smoked trout or salmon fillets, flaked
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- freshly grated Parmesan cheese or nutritional yeast to finish (optional)

DATE NIGHT TAGLIATELLE

METHOD

Put a large pot of water on to boil for the pasta and add 2 teaspoons of salt.

Prepare your courgette by cutting it in half widthways then slicing or peeling it into thin pasta-like strips to mimic the pasta, either using a mandoline or a vegetable peeler, if available. Set aside.

Now, take out a second pot, place it over a medium heat, add your olive oil, garlic and a pinch of salt and cook for 1 minute, then add the shallot or onion and cook gently for 5 minutes without colouring. Add a splash of water to the pan if it starts to colour.

Meanwhile, add the splash of olive oil and your pasta to the pot of salted boiling water and cook according to the packet instructions until al dente.

While the pasta finishes cooking, turn the heat on your onion and garlic back up to medium and add the white wine, if using. Reduce it by half, then add the cream, otherwise just add the cream and bring to the boil. Drain the cooked pasta, saving a cupful of the pasta water.

Now, add the dill (stalks and leaves), courgette and flaked fish to the larger pot along with the cream sauce and the pasta. Bring back to a simmer, stirring with some tongs, and adjust the consistency using the reserved pasta water.

Season with salt and a generous amount of pepper.

Divide the pasta between two bowls and finish with some Parmesan or nutritional yeast, if you like.

SERVES
6

EASY TIRAMISU

YOU WILL NEED

- 2 shots of espresso (60ml) or about 1 tbsp coffee granules
- 200ml boiling water (use 250ml if using coffee granules)
- 1 x 250g mascarpone cheese
- 300ml double cream
- 4 tbsp caster sugar
- 4 tbsp Kahlua liqueur, Frangelico liqueur, Marsala or dark rum (optional)
- 1 x 200g packet ladyfingers or sponge fingers, or 200g sponge or Madeira cake cut into strips

TO DECORATE

- 1 tbsp cacao nibs
- 1 tbsp unsweetened cocoa powder

METHOD

Mix your espresso or coffee granules with the boiling water and pour into a shallow dish or takeaway container.

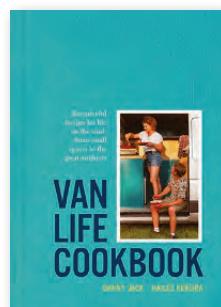
Take your mascarpone, double cream and sugar and whisk together in a mixing bowl until smooth and the consistency of thickly whipped cream. If using, whisk in your alcohol, 1 tablespoon at a time, until fully combined.

Take your ladyfingers or sponge/Madeira cake strips and very quickly roll each one in the coffee/liqueur mix for about 2-3 seconds. The key is to avoid sogginess by over-soaking them (if there is any leftover coffee/liqueur mix, either drizzle it over the top layer of the soaked ladyfingers/sponge cake in the container, or drink it).

Assemble and layer the dessert in the container of your choice (we use our sandwich box, which is 13 x 20cm). You can also make individual portions in 6 wide-bottomed glasses or teacups if you prefer.

Start with a layer of the soaked ladyfingers/sponge cake and then slather on half of your cream mix. Do one more layer of the soaked ladyfingers/sponge cake and finish with the remaining cream mix. Decorate with the cacao nibs and sifted cocoa powder, then cover (if there's enough spare space at the top of the dessert to do so) and leave to set in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours or ideally overnight.

*This is an extract from
Van Life Cookbook: Resourceful recipes for
life on the road; from small spaces to the great
outdoors by Danny Jack and Hailee Kukura
(Pavilion Books) Photos: Holly Farrier.*





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HIGH END OR BUDGET FRIENDLY?

Have you ever wondered why some wines are very expensive while others are very affordable? This can be confusing with so many bottles to choose from and you may be wondering if the extra money you pay is really worth it!

Some of you might think that a more expensive wine is always better, but is this always the case?

When you walk into a supermarket or wine shop, you might see bottles that range from just a few pounds to hundreds of pounds – although the latter examples are usually in specialist wine shops with very knowledgeable staff.

But why is there such a big difference? Sometimes a fancy label or the shape of the bottle can influence price, but not usually by more than a few pounds. However, the cost of a wine depends on several key factors such as where the grapes are grown, how the wine is made, how it is packaged and the demand for it versus the number of bottles produced. So, let's break down the main elements that contribute to the price tag you see in stores, which I hope will make your choices easier.

PRODUCTION COSTS

The cost of production is one of the biggest factors affecting its price. Expensive wines often come from vineyards where the grapes are grown on a smaller scale; they might also be hand-picked instead of machine harvested, which is more labour-intensive and time-consuming.

Hand-picked grapes in the vineyard are often further sorted in the winery, either by hand or by sophisticated machines to select only those deemed of high enough quality for the intended wine, so there may be some wastage. In addition, the winemaking process is usually more detailed and time-consuming for expensive wines, involving careful fermentation, high-quality oak barrels and precise ageing techniques which aim to bring out the best and most complex flavours.

FLAVOUR, BALANCE AND FINISH

Expensive wines are often more complex,

balanced and have a longer finish than less expensive ones. The finish refers to how long the impression of the wine stays with you – more expensive wines usually, but not always, create a longer-lasting impression than cheaper wines.





“

TODAY WITH IMPROVED WINEMAKING TECHNIQUES,
THERE ARE PLENTY OF AFFORDABLE WINES UNDER
£10 THAT ARE DELICIOUS AND WELL MADE.

Complexity comes with age so fruit in more affordable wines is often young and fresh with generic flavours rather than specific. Most wines in the under £10 price bracket are not made to age, and will usually deteriorate after a couple of years; they are made with the intention of being consumed young. But, as the wine ages, the fruit often evolves into cooked or dried fruit flavours with an array of other factors such as herbs, spices and other elements, depending on the wine, which add to the overall mouthfeel and enjoyment.

Often these wines spend several years in the winery, either in oak barrels or bottles, before they are released for sale and all this adds to the cost. Furthermore, many wines according to local wine laws have age requirements, such as Rioja Gran Reserva or Barolo and cannot be released until after a set time of ageing in the winery, as all these processes help to give the wine depth and character.

REGION AND TERROIR

Where a wine comes from, known as its region or terroir, greatly influences its price. Wines from famous regions like Bordeaux, Burgundy or the Napa Valley in California, tend to be more expensive because of their reputation and the strict rules they follow to make high-quality wine. These areas are known for their unique soil, climate and grape varieties, which all contribute to the wine's flavour.

Production of certain wines is limited, so often demand exceeds supply which enables producers to sell them at very high prices. The simple rule of supply and demand always

plays a role in wine pricing: if a particular wine is rare or in high demand, its price will likely be more than a wine that's produced in high volume for a large market.

BRANDING AND MARKETING

Well-known brands that have been around for a long time can charge more for their wines because people trust them and many use fancy packaging and labels that make the wine look more appealing. This doesn't always mean the wine is better, but people tend to know what they are getting because the wine often does not vary greatly between vintages. On the other hand, big companies can produce wine in large amounts which can lower the cost, while smaller wineries might charge more for their unique, handcrafted bottles.

Does this mean that only expensive wines are good? Of course not! Today with improved winemaking techniques, there are plenty of affordable wines under £10 that are delicious and well-made and let's face it – most of us are not going to have a £50 bottle with our pizza on a Wednesday night! It's really about finding a wine that you like, and understanding what more you will get for your money if you spend £20 as opposed to £10. Some lesser-known regions are producing some excellent wines at a fraction of the cost of more famous areas in order to get their wines better-known.

Don't be swayed solely by the price tag. Explore various wines, try different regions, and trust your taste buds. Whether it's a budget-friendly bottle or a high-end vintage, the best wine is the one that brings you joy. Cheers to discovering your perfect wine!

Rowena Hawtin DipWset

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