

Designers on GARDEN ROOMS

We asked three experts for their tips on blending a summerhouse into a garden



MICHAEL BALSTON
Landscape architect and garden designer, 01380 848181, balston.co.uk.



JULIE TOLL
Landscape and garden designer, RHS Chelsea Gold medal winner, 01438 310095, julietoll.co.uk.



ANDREW McINDOE
Garden designer and author of *The Hillier Gardener's Guide*, andrew.mcindoe@hillier.co.uk.

Which plants would you grow to create a fragrant setting?

In winter I would enjoy the knock-out scent of *Sarcococca confusa*.

For early summer it would be



wreathed in wisteria, left, or I'd grow *Cytisus battandieri* against it with philadelphus nearby and bay, sage and lavender.

For winter perfume I would use the Christmas box, *Sarcococca confusa*,

which can also be cut to bring into the house. I would also use *Lonicera purpusii*, which responds well to clipping and will still flower happily in late winter. My summer choice would be the evergreen climber *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, which would use the summerhouse as a support as it grows.

Trachelospermum jasminoides' dark green shining foliage, which tints red in winter, makes a perfect background for a pot of *Lilium regale* with its richly fragrant summer trumpets. But for midsummer scent, nothing beats Philadelphus 'Belle Etoile', with creamy white single flowers. I like to grow it with evergreen *Sarcococca confusa*, a delight in winter when its tiny white flowers scent the cool air.

What is the best way to link the house with the summerhouse?

Physically, the link would be made by a path, strengthened possibly with a pergola or walkway with apples trained over it, or a vine sprawling along its length. You might also build in the same materials as the house and perhaps in the same style, so that it and the summerhouse are part of a family. On the other hand it could be interesting to use materials such as glass and steel in deliberate contrast.

I would create a journey from the house to the summerhouse with a curved path made of paving, infilled with plantings or gravel, so that there is a varied visual pace.



With any garden structure, appropriateness is most important. A summerhouse should suit both the garden and the house. Ease of access is also important, particularly if you use it for dining out. Too often, summerhouses are sited too far away from the house to be useful and they become storage buildings. Subtle solar-powered lighting is worthwhile to light the path between the summerhouse and the house.

How would you make a summerhouse work in a small garden?

A summerhouse in a small garden could be quite dominant if there is little space. Avoid scaling it down in response to the lack of space. Keep it large so that it is useable. Also, use good materials, detail it well and site it to link with key views through the house. Use plants that unify it with the rest of the garden, with leafy textures that contrast with its structure, and greens that throw it into strong relief.

Accentuate the structure and make it the focal point. I would even say make it bigger than you think the space would suit. It would be fun to make it tall, thin and elegant, with finials and curves. It would need to be built in a material that had some conversation with the house, but it could be minimalist, or formal and traditional. Even if it's over the top, it can always be softened by plants.

In a small garden, extravagant planting adds to the theatrical effect. Bold-leaved shrubs such as *Fatsia japonica* combine well with large-leaved ivies, such as *Hedera colchica* 'Dentata Variegata' (right), and look good all year round. ■



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