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APPLE DAYS

Many culinary herbs and flowers also have healing properties – these five are among the most widely grown in medicinal gardens:

- **Calendula officinalis (Marigolds)**

This edible flower, prepared as a tea, is used to treat digestive problems and ulcers. It is sometimes also prepared in a recipe with lavender and rose geranium to create a natural acne treatment gel. Look for plants that are sticky with resin, since this is the medicinal quality that you need.

- **Echinacea**

This is often used as a boost for run-down immune systems and to help fend off colds and flu.

- **Lavandula (Lavender)**

Used both fresh and dried, the flowers are famous for their relaxing and calming properties. The plant also has antiseptic healing properties.

- **Rosmarinus officinalis (Rosemary)**

This culinary plant is often used in herbal preparations to boost concentration and memory.

- **Taraxacum officinale (Dandelion)**

Often considered a 'thug' by gardeners (for ruining their lawns, in particular), this is actually a multipurpose culinary and medicinal herb. The blossom may be used as an infusion to relieve aching muscles. The leaf and root are used in teas as a liver tonic and in tinctures and salves to help soothe skin.

Disclaimer: these plants should never be consumed without first having sought professional advice from an expert in their medicinal use.

Contact details:

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A view through ornamental grasses on a cold December

GARDEN DESIGN TIPS

PREPARING FOR WINTER

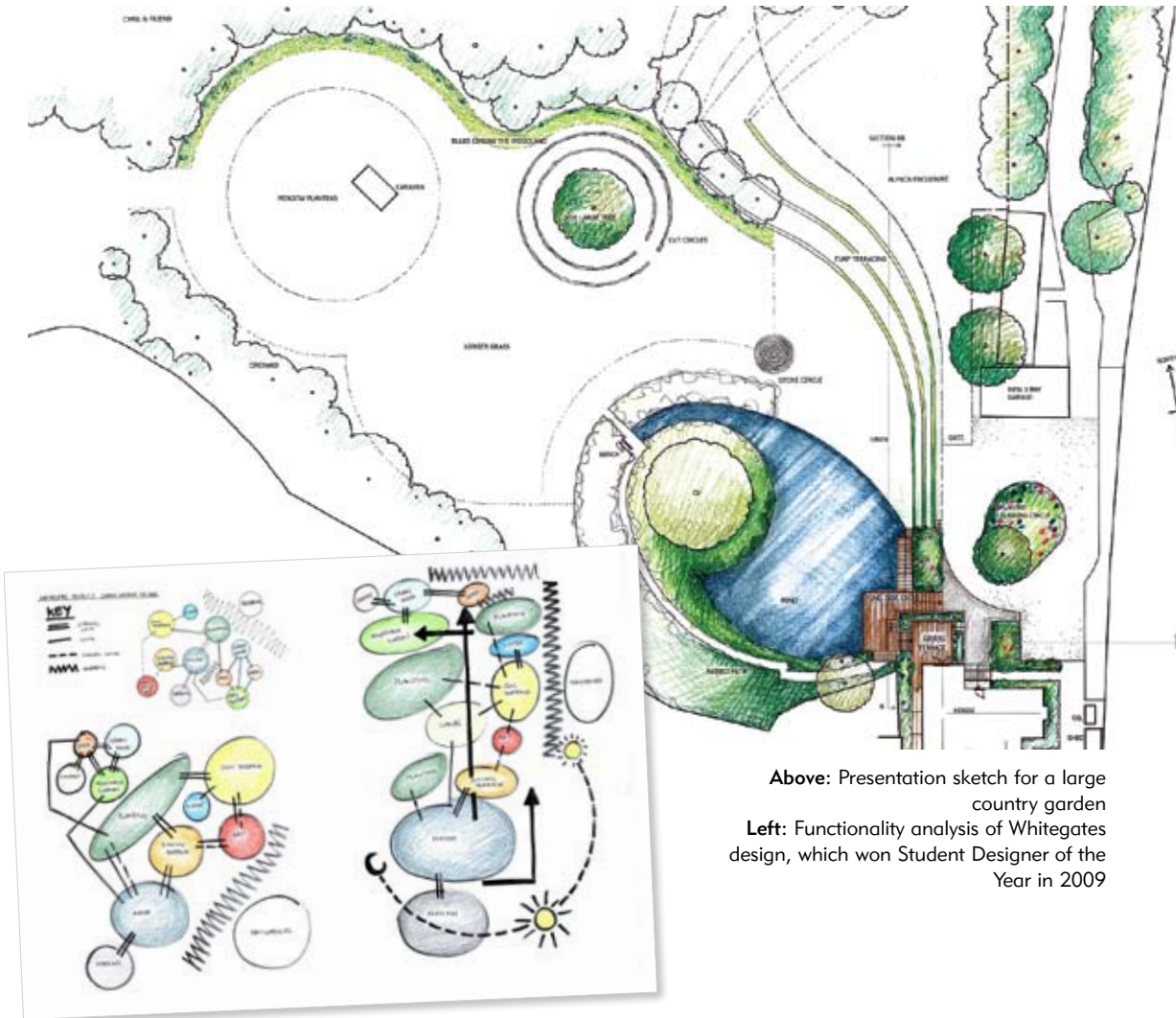
Garden designer Sarah Naybour shares her professional tips for planning your garden as well as preparing for winter..

Sarah looks forward to winter in and out of her garden. For her, it is a time for contemplation and planning as well as pre-winter, practical gardening chores. Indoors, plans are drawn up and plants researched ready for the new season.

These are her top five tips for garden design planning and preparing your garden for winter...

Hard Landscaping

Look carefully at the layout of the space. Does it work functionally? If not, why? Is there an alternative? For example, if the terrace is along the back of a north facing house and always in shadow, could it be moved out six feet? This would then leave space for raised beds and a wonderful shady plant display. Think outside the box.



Above: Presentation sketch for a large country garden

Left: Functionality analysis of Whitegates design, which won Student Designer of the Year in 2009

Be bold

If there are plants which have not been happy this year, research them and see if they can be moved. Alternatively, if your garden doesn't have the right microclimate for them, get rid of them and then look forward to finding something new and appropriate. Take it out now and allow the soil to breathe through the winter. It is also not too late to be putting in bulbs for spring. Plant these in large numbers, 50 or more of one variety, and make sure they complement the surrounding foliage and early perennials. Tulipa 'Spring green' is a safe choice and looks wonderfully elegant.

Soil

The key to a healthy garden is healthy soil. At this time of year, once I have removed all the 'unwants', I treat the soil to a final hoe and then a layer of compost. I don't bother digging it in. Just let the good old winter weather do that for you. The rain, freeze and thaw will break it down nicely. If you have heavy soil, apply thin layers of grit and compost every two weeks. The RHS used this method at Rosemoor and it did wonders for their clay.

Research your new plants with care

Stick to the adage 'Right plant. Right place'. I'm not one for fussy plants myself so don't try to

mix plants which require different conditions in the same bed. Now is a good time to plant trees, evergreens and shrubs. Think about the structure they add and the variety of foliage. Texture is a beautiful thing. Try contrasting evergreens with ever-silvers. Silver leaved plants will shine out against a dark background and add a shine to the dull days of winter.

Leave well alone

Many books and magazines advise cutting back perennials. I prefer to leave those which have strong structure like spiky Eryngiums, Echinacea cones, late flowering ornamental grasses and Sedums. These look stunning when touched with frost or dew. I then cut them back after the last frost in March. It also means your garden still looks full throughout the winter. Try it. If you don't like it then you can always cut them next year. Experiment and enjoy what your garden tells you.



Frosty Eryngium tripartitum



Sarah Naybour set up her garden design business after graduating with a distinction from Oxford College of Garden Design in 2009. She went on to be awarded Student Designer of the Year by the Society of Garden Designers and has been designing and building gardens ever since. Passionate about colour, she approaches gardens as if they were canvasses on which to paint.

Sarah will be opening her own garden under the NGS scheme in 2012.

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Sarah in her own garden