

## Small spaces...

# BIG IDEAS

Award winning landscape architect and RTÉ's *Super Garden* judge Tim Austen gives us his tips to think big.

Don't let a confined space limit the possibility of having a beautifully designed garden. Garden design can often focus on sweeping borders and expansive acres in the country but not all of us have that space!



Because most small gardens are surrounded by boundaries and are generally seen in a single view, they have a tendency to feel confined and boxed in, but there are a range of tricks to create the illusion of more space.

- 1** Divide long straight gardens into two or three smaller spaces with the use of plants or visual screens to provide variation and increased interest.
- 2** Ensure planting areas are in proportion with other areas of the garden such as the lawn and hard landscape areas to provide a more balanced look to the space.
- 3** If you are fortunate enough to have a nice view, use plants, hedging or landscape elements such as walls, gates or sculptural pieces to frame it to give a sense that the garden is reaching into the landscape beyond and this will help create the illusion of more space.
- 4** Use vertical elements, such as trees or pergolas that reach in to the sky above the garden to increase the scale of the garden in its third dimension.
- 5** Where a garden slopes, use terraces or create strong level changes over shorter distances to make the garden more interesting and create usable garden spaces with flatter surfaces.
- 6** Improve your boundary planting to soften angular or hard corners and screen ugly boundary walls. If your garden is confined by walls, the colour of your walls can actually have some impact on how spacious your garden feels.
- 7** Ensure that curves in a garden are not over exaggerated or too short. Long graceful curves work best.
- 8** Use a well-placed mirror to make it seem like the garden is bigger than it is.
- 9** Ensure that the selection of landscape materials is chosen to compliment the colours and textures of your house.
- 10** Ensure that your planting style is carried right through and do not change styles within a small zone, as this will create a visual clash that will not work and will make the space seem smaller than it is.

Tim Austen is available for consultation on all aspects of gardening. For more information, log onto [www.austenassociates.ie](http://www.austenassociates.ie)