

# MEDITERRANEAN GARDENS

What are they? How to create one & The best plants to make a Mediterranean garden



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# INTRODUCTION

## What is a Mediterranean garden?

If you are a lover of outdoor life, or fancy bringing home your holiday destination, then the Mediterranean garden is perfect. Nothing beats outdoor dining and a glass of wine on a summer's evening with pastels and terracotta colours combining for a relaxing atmosphere. You can add to this by creating a pond with running water, punctuating the ambience with the sound of water. Shade provision features, such as pergolas, give the Mediterranean garden a three-dimensional feel. Thankfully, the plants that occupy a Mediterranean garden are often tough by nature.

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## How can I make my garden look Mediterranean?

Alfresco living is the number one desired effect of the Mediterranean garden. As such, this style is often dominated by terracing and a dining area, though this should not be at the expense of the plants. Combine dining and horticulture with troughs of herbs and grapes which straddle a pergola. Many beautiful ornamentals are grown in a Mediterranean garden and a good number are drought-tolerant, only requiring minimal water and feeding once established. Many of these plants are also superb for attracting pollinators and are well-known for their scents.

Mediterranean gardens also fit very nicely into terraces and balconies consisting entirely of containers. Large terracotta pots of mixed plants in an area painted with pastel colours will give you that alfresco lifestyle feeling.



# HOW TO CREATE A MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN IN 10 EASY STEPS

If you have the time and the capital, it is easy to get carried away with a Mediterranean garden. York stone slabs, expensive terracotta pots and even elaborate statues can be incorporated with this garden style. But don't let that put you off - a small patio or balcony with a few pots and decent plants are more than enough to make an excellent outdoor living space. Follow our ten-step plan to bring a small piece of the Mediterranean to your garden space.

1. Plan: Plan hard landscaping areas such as patios, pergolas and dining areas first. Grab yourself a piece of paper, measure out your garden and let the ideas flow. Colour is important for the overall effect of the garden and so painting in pastels and terracotta will really give you that Mediterranean feel. Consider this when choosing patio slabs or brickwork.
2. Choose: Pick out your plants, considering which will be used to soften path edges or left to climb and ramble - also be sure to look for anything edible that may add to your outdoor dining experience.
3. Define: Mark out the garden either by spraying the floor with line paint, or using lengths of hose to define those hard and soft areas.
4. Clear: Now it's time to put in the hard work and clear out the existing garden, ready for the new design to take shape.
5. Construct: It's time to get the hard landscaping built, including your seating area, pergolas and pathways. These 'hard' elements will provide the structure and 'flow' for your garden and start bringing your design to life.
6. Improve: Dig in plenty of Organic matter to both fertilise and improve soil structure in the planting areas. Good drainage is important to Mediterranean plants; if your garden is on heavy clay it may be better to create your Mediterranean garden in raised beds and containers. Alternatively, you can simply mix in plenty of horticultural grit and this should do the trick.

7. Plant: It's time to plant up your lovely plants, to soften the hard landscaping and really bring your garden to life. The application of gravel mulches around your plants will add to that arid effect.
8. Focal Point: If possible, find a place for a water feature - it doesn't have to be large. A garden containing a small water fountain will create that aquatic sound and draw the eye around the garden. A container area really suits this style of garden, so don't be scared to choose large and oversized pots.
9. Gravel: Many Mediterranean gardens contain swathes of gravel rather than grass - now is the time for the addition of either option. If laying down gravel, it is important that you put down a decent sub-base of some crushed stone rather than just laying gravel over an existing lawn or bare soil.
10. Establish: Your new plants will need help to establish themselves. Feeding throughout the growing season, preferably with a slow-release fertiliser will help their establishment.



# TOP 10 PLANTS FOR MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN



1



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## Agapanthus 'Brilliant Blue'

Growing in stony, rocky outcrops natural environment, this herbaceous perennial is popular due to its incredibly deep blue flowers which form loose clusters. These flowers, which appear in mid-summer sit upon deep green lanceolate leaves and the whole plant can reach up to 50 centimetres in height. These Agapanthus are tailor-made for a Mediterranean-style garden. They do prefer sheltered growing conditions and so planting in a South or West-facing aspect is advised.



2



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## Chamaerops Humilis

Have you seen the architectural forms and beauty of the Palm tree? No Mediterranean garden is complete without the presence of a Palm. Chamaerops are hardy specimens, tolerating temperatures as low as minus 13 degrees; it is perfect in the UK's climate. It is ideal for a small Mediterranean garden, growing slowly to reach 2 metres in both height and width. These plants love a nice sunny spot, though they are willing to put up with more exposed conditions.



3



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## Cistus x Pulverulentus 'Sunset'

These plants have no problem with dry conditions and their profusion of magenta flowers with orange/yellow centres are abundant throughout the summer. This floral display is more pronounced due to the backdrop of downy grey-green foliage and the whole shrub will grow to 60 centimetres in height and width. Like all Mediterranean plants, they love the sunshine so make sure you avoid planting in the shade.



4



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## Convolvulus Cneorum

Silver foliage is always a central theme in an arid garden and this spreading, evergreen shrub has plenty of intense narrow, silver oblong leaves. Its silver foliage is not its only merit in the Mediterranean garden as it has eye-catching bright white single flowers which start to appear in spring and continue blooming throughout the summer, spread generously over the plant.



5



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## Prunus Lusitanica

The Portuguese Laurel will add structure to a border or perimeter of a garden. This hardy, evergreen shrub has dark waxy leaves that are narrow and ovate in shape, born on dark red shoots. They produce spikes of white flowers in early summer, followed by dark purple fruits. A superb hedging subject, this Prunus is happy to grow in all soil types, provided that it drains freely. These plants are quite happy in full sun or partially shady aspects.

# TOP 10 PLANTS FOR MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN



6

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## Olea Europa

Primarily grown for their much-desired fruit and oil, they also make great ornamentals. Their small, narrow leaves are mid-green on the surface, silver on the underside and leathery in texture; they shimmer and rattle in the wind. They produce tiny, white flowers which may produce black fruits - though this is not always guaranteed in the UK. This is the Gardening Express Olive, sold as a mini standard which is perfect for adding that Mediterranean feel to gardens of any size.



7

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## Cordyline Australis Verde

This Gardening Express variety has spiky, sword-shaped leaves that are bright green and form spiky crowns that are striking against a blue sky, with sprays of white flowers being produced in summer. As they mature, this evergreen shrub produces multiple stems and crowns of foliage, giving the garden a real exotic feel. These plants prefer a sheltered, sunny or partially shaded position - making sure that they are kept out of cold winds.



8

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## Lavendula Angustifolia 'Munstead'

Gardening Express has a great selection of Lavenders, including some real stand-out performers. The grey-green leaves are aromatic, making them a great ornamental feature; they are perfect for providing a foil for all sorts of other plants. In mid-to-late summer, they produce short spikes of flowers from pale to deep purple. This lavender enjoys a sunny, sheltered spot and will reach a height and width of around 1 metre.



9

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## Salvia Nemorosa 'Blue Queen' – Ostfriesland

Sages come in many shapes and forms, making them a fundamental addition to the Mediterranean garden. They have low water requirements and are often loved by pollinating insects such as Bees. This particular Gardening Express variety is a compact perennial with deep violet-purple flower spikes appearing in late spring to early summer. They prefer a sunny aspect and prefer a free-draining, loamy soil.



10

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## Phormium Tenax 'Variegatum'

Great varieties of Phormium have come into the gardening world in recent years. Their upright, arching architectural form make them popular for use in Mediterranean gardens. This Gardening Express variety has special foliage: the sword-like, leathery leaves are green and striped with cream towards the margin, providing year-round interest and structure for your garden. They prefer a free-draining soil and will grow happily in either sunshine or partial shade,



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# MEDITERRANEAN GARDENS

## How to create one & what plants to use

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Gardening Express, 1386 London Road, Leigh On Sea, SS9 2UJ.

