



Forum

On the *Gardeners' World* website, you'll find lots of lively debate, with readers asking questions and offering advice. To join in conversations like this one, or to ask a question, go to: gardenersworld.com/forum

How do I grow potatoes in plastic tubs?

● I read somewhere that you should put them in a small amount of soil to begin with, then add more as they start to grow.

rainbowfish

● I grew spuds in old potting compost bags last year in my polytunnel using the same method as rainbowfish suggests. I turned the bags inside out so the black inside was outside, attracting the heat of the sun. I had a lovely crop!

Hostafan1

● I grow them in very large pots, a few in each, and, as suggested, add soil as the haulm grows. I add just six inches over the top of them to begin with, and have good clean crops.

cornelly

● I grow spuds in tubs every year as well as in the ground. Mainly to experiment but both do well each year. Its quite simple, any tubs will do, as long as they have a bit of depth. The thing about spuds is they grow anywhere. Just don't over do it when planting the spuds. I use a medium-sized black tub and just put two in. I fill the tub half way up, make two holes and shove the spuds in, then cover with compost and leave in my greenhouse. Once they start growing above the soil just keep adding compost to cover them. Simple really. On hot days I stand mine outside because the greenhouse is too hot for them.

Master Gardener

Follow and add to this thread at gardenersworld.com/potatoes-tubs

Over the fence

Should gardening be accessible for all?



Mark Lane and Jack Shilley debate if gardening should be for everyone, regardless of age or ability

The answer is simple – yes! Yet, why don't we see more gardens designed by the physically disabled, the young, the elderly, people with learning difficulties – in fact, anyone who has a passion for gardening? I'm a garden designer and I'm in a wheelchair. I love designing gardens that are accessible to ambulatory and disabled people alike. So why do I come across so many gardens with awkward steps, narrow paths, small turning circles for wheelchairs and disabled access around the back (usually by the bins)?

I stopped working in London due to ill health 10 years ago, but with a love of gardening and having published books on horticulture, I decided a career in garden design was for me. There are physical limitations – I'm only able to do little at a time, but often, which helps my health. Yet,

“The world of gardening needs to open its eyes to everyone”

I've never come across a recognised garden designer in a wheelchair. Why? I have a trusted partner who runs around with a tape measure, and contractors to help with construction and planting.

Gardening and horticulture should not have barriers and restrictions. I am living proof that gardening can improve our physical and mental well-being. Without gardening, I'd be a different person.

I wrote to Dan Pearson and Cleve West, and their friendly insights mobilised me into action and encouraged my aspiration to have a show garden at Chelsea. The world of gardening needs to open its eyes to everyone, and not be selective. Beautiful gardens and show gardens can be made accessible to all – it just takes a different perspective.

Mark Lane is a garden designer and passionate plantsman based in Kent.

As a young gardener (I'm 20), I believe that gardening should be accessible to everyone. As a responsible nation, we should provide green spaces, gardens and allotments for as many people as possible – no matter what their position in society. And while this may seem like a lot to wish for, I see signs of a positive change across all areas of horticulture – especially for young people.

The RHS has just appointed its youngest-ever curator of an RHS garden in the form of Matthew Pottage, aged 29. It has also made 20-year-old Jamie Butterworth an RHS ambassador. Gardening forms part of the national curriculum, with many primary schools running gardening clubs and creating wildlife spaces – we're sowing the seeds of gardening from a younger age these days. I've seen an increased level of interest in YoungHort, an initiative I created to promote young talent within horticulture – it's all very encouraging.

Unfortunately, away from specialist institutions like the RHS, making gardening accessible to young people can still be a challenge, for example, many young adults struggle to get on the property ladder, let alone buy a place with a garden. It's also hard to get an allotment. As a result, we're creating a generation that is in danger of losing touch with the world of plants. This is a great shame when it is widely acknowledged that gardening is good for us, both physically and mentally.

“We're creating a generation that is losing touch with plants”

But there are plenty of ways to connect with gardening and nature at a local level. Take the likes of guerrilla gardener Richard Reynolds – he gardens in whatever space he can find, no matter how small, so there's no reason other young people can't do the same.

Jack Shilley is a keen horticulturist, and director and founder of the YoungHort initiative.

HAVE YOUR SAY How do you feel about gardening being open to all ages and all levels of ability? Do you have any experiences to share? Write and tell us at the address on p23