

October 9

Good morning!

I think this is the perfect time to start a new project in the garden.

For those who are fortunate to have a very established garden with large trees and overgrown vegetation the idea is usually to get stuck in and either start hacking back to get that neat and conformity look we believe to be the right thing or we just start removing plants to create more space.

Before diving into a rushed project like this, give it a bit more thought and consider a new natural look without all the huffing and puffing and gallons of sweat.

Sometimes our gardens just outgrow us in a natural way.

It could also be that we used the wrong plants in the wrong position in the first place.

You remember that shrub you bought years back and were told it would grow to 2m?

Its now twice the size and seemingly wants to continue growing, much the same problem Jack had with the beanstalk!!

The neighbouring plants have done the same thing, all pushing and pulling to get to the light through the impenetrable mass.

The exact same process happens in nature and this is the perfect environment for certain insects and skulking birds of prey like the Boubou, Flycatchers and others.

Lets keep the interest and wildlife but modify the garden to make it more accessible to us.

The object of the exercise is to get us into the garden instead of just looking at it from the outside.

Plot a pathway into that wilderness and start off by removing the lower branches of trees and shrubs that restrict access.

By doing this we open it up and raise the canopy to allow in more light.

Instead of removing some of those tall bushy shrubs, trim the lower branches up to a point where we can actually walk under them!

You will find that a lot of smaller sub-shrubs and groundcovers have died back completely due to lack of light.

The forest floor can be re-established with suitable groundcovers and pathways can be mulched.

If space allows create small open areas where you can place a small table and chair, great for children's picnics and the perfect secret hideaway!

I might just be the perfect peaceful spot for you too!

Another concern, is the use of creepers and climbers in the garden.

Sometimes we get totally put off climbing plants because most get out of hand and become a maintenance nightmare.

Don't blame the plant, just find the correct specimen for the right position and purpose.

Good examples of runaway climbers include Ivy, Ficus Tickey Creeper and many of the Bignonia family, certainly not suitable for smaller gardens.

In most cases their growth habit is not restricted to a certain size and they just carry on growing, sometimes completely covering buildings and smothering trees.

Ivy is used extensively to cover walls as they develop stem roots to attach themselves.

Their vegetative growth phase is fast and aggressive, climbing up anything that stands still long enough....a warning....don't fall asleep near your Ivy!!

They do require a lot of maintenance and keep in mind that they also get out of control as a ground cover, smothering everything in sight...so think carefully before planting.

In the end its just about the wrong advice and choice of plant!

The answer in most cases is to select smaller, more dainty like climbers and creepers having a more limited growth habit.

Examples are- *Thunbergia alata*- the Black eyed Susan which comes in a yellow, orange and pink flowering varieties.

Our South African Clematis-*Clematis brachiata* with its mass of white flowers in spring is very much unused in our gardens.

Our very own Jasmine- *Jasminum multipartitum* is the perfect scented climber for small semi shady areas.

Like the Black eyed Susan and Clematis they do need a structure of sorts, like a lattice, fence or ornamental obelisk to climb up.

Canary Creepers which can get up into trees and shrubs are not aggressive, don't take over and are easy to maintain if so required.

The exotic *Trachelospermum jaminoides* is also a popular twiner with highly scented flowers.

It has a limited growth size and requires minimum effort to keep neat if desired!!

Another interesting concept is the use of Flower Towers or Scented towers.

This really is just a roll of fencing material, about 50cm in diameter and as high as you like.

Secure the upright tower with stakes and plant up with your favourite creepers.

In the past these towers were used to good effect with Sweet Peas in the spring, when flowering finished the tower was placed back in the shed.

A bit of a waste considering it can be used as a permanent feature

To end off today I urge you to think of a few new creative garden ideas this summer.

Until next week its goodbye from me