

INSTANT GARDENING

DO YOU WANT TO HAVE THE GARDEN OF YOUR DREAMS?
ENLIST THE ASSISTANCE OF A SPECIALIST IN INSTANT
GARDENING, AND YOU CAN HAVE A PERFECT PLOT IN NO TIME AT ALL

It takes two weeks at most to make a perfect garden out of an uncultivated piece of land. The best landscape architects and garden designers provide proof of this year on year display at the Chelsea Flower Show. In this short time, they are able to conjure up spectacular grounds out of nothing, including blooming flowers, sophisticated topiary and mature trees.

There's no reason why such miracles should remain restricted to competitions. 'Instant gardening' is the process which now delivers perfect gardens with no waiting time direct to the door of private property owners. There is obviously a price to be paid for this, but the gain in terms of time and quality of life is almost endless. No one has to 'be on show' anymore for years after buying a new house until the hedges and trees have grown to finally provide a screen. Plus, the garden looks like the garden of your dreams from day one.

Money alone, however, won't guarantee a good result. It is crucial that all plants, trees and shrubs are perfectly suited to the house and its environment, precisely because they are already mature and don't have to be nurtured like small young plants. 'Instant garden' demands expertise from those who plant it.

'We obtain plants from a variety of countries,' says Ralf Knoflach, who has established himself as one of the first



Pictured from top: which tree would you like? Japanese pine for €42,000; yew hedging for €1,000 per block or rhododendrons for €2,000 per metre

'green brokers'. He buys park trees and mature rhododendrons which are already four metres high, from two German specialists. He gets shrubs and ground cover from Holland and topiary and hedge blocks, which can be up to ten metres tall, from Belgium. He sources Mediterranean bushes from Italy and imports specialist plants, such as roses or peonies, from England and France.

Knoflach and his partner, Stefan Kolb, have more than 10,000 photos of specimen bushes, park and avenue trees and other distinctive plants in their current archive that they carry around with them stored on a laptop. When the client has made his selection, it only takes a telephone call and the plants he wants are reserved. He can also, if he prefers, travel with Knoflach and have a look for himself in situ. Either way, the trees are marked with a seal so that the client receives exactly the same specimens that he has chosen – important, because not all pines are the same, not all oaks identical; here, like buying art, uniqueness matters.

It is also important that the mature plants have been cultivated in such a way that they can withstand replanting without damage. 'The roots must be cut back regularly for many years,' says Knoflach, 'so that they form a compact ball which can be lifted without causing them too much harm.' In the same way, crowns, which should be shaped in a cloud formation or as a protective ➤



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roof, must be pruned year after year. Only an expert can judge whether a tree nursery cultivates its plants reliably. 'Large bonobos from Japan, for example, must be acclimatised to our weather for up to two years before they can be planted in a private garden,' explains Knoflach.

Knoflach's company, Green Gartenkultur, also provides a guarantee of quality for a period after planting, because specifically with large feature

trees, the first two years in their new position is critical. From an irrigation system to perfect pruning twice a year, Knoflach and his employees take care of everything.

The Swiss garden designer Enzo Enea is able to afford his own dedicated 'tree broker', who is constantly on the hunt for unusual trees. Enea is now regarded as something of a rising star, especially since he is a Chelsea Flower Show award-winner. Outside the UK, he was probably the first to have elevated instant gardening to a recognised art. So it makes sense that in the wake of Art Basel he has also gone to Miami where he has run his own office since 2005.

Regardless of where he works – Enea has already completed more than 500 projects, in places such as Russia, Marbella and France – for him, the art of landscaping always lies in its limitation: 'I work with fine, albeit excellent ingredients,' he says. For example, a weeping willow can be a focal point; because it already bears 70 annual rings it can lend much character to a new garden as if it had been there for generations.

Just as carefully as choosing a feature tree, every single detail of an outdoor room – and gardens are nothing less than that to him – is selected by Enea, a perfectionist. Also, dissatisfied with some of the products available on the market, he has set to work and himself designed everything that makes a garden a home, from items of furniture to plant pots to lighting.

His clients should be able to enjoy their gardens from the first day onwards, and for this reason alone, his designs are mostly minimalist. 'The effect is calming, also because one doesn't have to give much thought to its maintenance.' The care of his clients' gardens is taken on by his team, which in the space of a few years has grown to 15 specialist workers; after all, people looking for instant gardens tend to be very busy, without the time to devote to mowing the lawn and doing the weeding. Many are aesthetes, who will gladly spend a considerable amount of money on the elegant unity of indoors and outdoors; typically, you should expect to pay around 15% of the building costs of a house for an instant garden.

This 3,500sq m garden came into being in just three weeks. Large pines, prepared lawn turf and rhododendrons give the illusion of a mature garden. A 50 year old, 15-tonne beech tree (around €20,000) was brought to its new home in Berlin by special crane

CONTACTS & INFORMATION

The Chelsea Flower Show takes place this year from 22 – 26 May at the Royal Hospital, London SW3. chelsea.org.uk/chelsea

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