

I Changed My Garden From a Dump Into an EDEN

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ISBN #: 978-1-365-79486-5

Introduction.

This is a written account of how i gradually turned my garden from looking like a waste ground into something that is quite pleasant, tranquil and somewhere nice to sit out in on those long summer evenings. I hope that after reading this some of you might be inspired to pick up the fork and spade and tackle that horrible patch of weeds that has been accumulating in your garden. I know from experience that if a garden has been neglected for a long time and on the occasion that you venture out into it you think to yourself " *Look at the state of this garden one day i must do something about it* ". In reality that day never really comes. I'm sure that in the past you have visited some places in the summer time and they have a beautiful scenic garden on display and you stop to admire the view. There is nothing to stop you doing the same in your garden if you only knew how, in reality it is probably down to laziness. So after reading this ebook get cracking on that garden, the end result is truly rewarding.

Chapter 1: My Inspiration

T.V. Show.

In England here we had a TV show called Groundforce which was about a team of experts that would go to a persons home and renovate thier garden from a waste land into a scene of beauty with nice full grown shrubs put in, an

immaculate lawn, patio decking etc within 2 to 3 days. It starred Alan Titchmarsh a celebrity gardener and Tony Walch who is quite an expert in the field of DIY .Now that sounds all very marvelous but not every one can have a team of experts come and renovate their garden for them. To hire private contractors to do the work is quite expensive. It would be more fun to do the work yourself and when finished you can step back and say " *All my own work*".

The Benefits.

There are 2 main benefits to doing the work yourself. 1 is the fact that any outdoor activity has quite a few obvious health benefits and second, watching the progress from day to day as your future garden of eden takes shape .The big hurdle is to go into the garden and actually start the work but you have to go out with a positive attitude.

Hampton Court Flower Show.

Hampton court, for any one who is not familiar with our english heritage is a palace built by king Henry VIII over 5 hundred years ago. It has a splendid palace that is a tourist attraction open to the public and several acres of gardens plus a huge area of parklands in the surrounding areas. Every year they host a flower show where large flower beds are professionally planted and displayed for the general public to visit. The displays are quite lavish and beautiful and boast quite a large variety of plants. There are many other places that host these displays and any one who needs a little help in the inspiration department, it is highly recommended to give them a visit.

No Interest.

For quite a long time i never really had much interest in gardening. To me a flower was just simply something that grew in the garden. But back in 2015 i was seriously looking at my garden in general. At the back i had an old garden shed that was being used to store unwanted items like bits of old furniture etc. There was a lot of bramble and weed that was in excess of nearly 4 feet high. The garden fence on one side was just about standing up with large gaps that had rotted away with climbing weed on it. There was also a pile of junk at the

front of the garden that had accumulated from years of " *Put it in the garden for now*". There was only one word for it, it was a " DUMP".



Chapter 2: Day Of Action

Start The Work

Incidentally one of my neighbours next door kept quite a nice garden both back and front of thier house and that gave me a bit of inspiSo one day in August 2015 i decided to do something about it. ration. My brother Roger who lives with me helped me to literately just crop all the overgrown foliage and weeds right down to ground level. I obtained some of those council green recycle bags, and filled them all up with the cut down weeds. We must have used about 30 in all, it was that bad.

The Old Shed

Next we have to empty the old shed of all the accumulated rubbish and pile it all at the front of the garden, with all the rest of the other accumulated rubbish. Now you have to picture the scene that nobody has set foot in that shed for years. Foliage from a nearby tree growing in my neighbours garden had spread into the shed and it was sprouting out of the roof. I know that there is actually 2 old televisions, 2 chest of drawers ,2 old bike frames, a rusty old lawnmower and an assortment of objects that had long been forgotten. This is one of those occasions where you have to roll your sleeves up and take the bull by the horns, an old english saying, and just drag everything outside.

Inside The Shed

garden in a We had to use a pair of heavy duty snips to cut away the branches that had grown inside. When we had finished we were able to step fully inside and then we could see how rotten and decayed it had become. We then set about dismantling the shed. Actually it literally fell apart because it was so neglected. It had so much woodworm that there was not much holding it together. All the parts were piled with the rest of the debris . I can tell you it looked quite a sight but now we could see the new light.



Rubbish Clearance

The next stage was to get all the rubbish and junk cleared away. I checked through my local yellow pages and local paper but there was not much to choose. So i went online and Googled for garden rubbish clearance for my area, Twickenham, and a few choices came up. I made an appointment and some one came round to make an estimate and it came to £300.00 . If you seriously want to clear your garden of junk you have to be prepared to spend some money. The green waste bags i put out into the street ready for the Council rubbish collection day.

Rubbish Cleared

A week later the day arrived for the main pile of junk to be removed. This is all piled at the front patio area of the garden. The 2 man team piled all the junk into the dump truck, it had to be done in 2 loads, it was that bad. After about 2 hours it was all cleared and what a difference. With all the loose debris and green waste bags out of the way the garden looked better already.

Back Of Garden

At the back of my garden there is a field with a infant school built on it, and

the entire perimeter of the field has had a large fence running along all the back gardens attached to it. Also at the back there is an old fence that we erected several years ago. Between our fence and the fence shielding the field there is a 3 foot gap and a lot of bramble had grown and it was over hanging our fence so the next task was to get between the 2 fences and we just hacked the whole lot down. Afterwards there was another pile of bramble to dispose of so we had to obtain more council green sacks. Just to point out some of you are probably wondering why don't i burn the bramble, but it only makes more mess and i am not in favour of large bonfires in the garden.

Chapter 3: Making a Plan

Ideas

As with any project you start you have to have a few ideas of what you want to do. My garden is rectangular shaped so it is pretty basic, therefore keeping nice straight lines will really enhance the lawn and border areas. Also you can observe the garden from an upstairs window as you can then have a birdseye view and you can have a better perspective of the finish you want to obtain. Develop a mental picture of the finished garden and you will really spur yourself on. Also start taking photos of the before and after parts of your work and you will be quite surprised of the outcome.

Laying the Foundation

As with any project like this you have to lay a foundation to work with. Once you have completed the ground work you will have done a large part of the work. Do not even think about plants and flowers at this stage, as you will not have a scenic view to work with. Complete all the heavy work first like any digging, raking, building etc so you can see what you have to work with. It is like if you was going to build a house, you would have to have a nice strong level base to work with. Getting a decent and beautiful garden is very much the same, so complete the foundation first.

The Lawn

I have a lawn in my garden that was sown quite a long time ago that has been moderately mowed over the years, a bit worn torn and bare in places with a path right up the middle. On one side there is a square shape dug out for a small flower display and a somewhat border right around the edge of the lawn. So at this point there was 2 tasks that i wanted to do, give the border a

good dig over, improve the lawn and at the top of the garden it is higher than the rest of the garden, so i am going to make it into a tier with steps leading up.

The Border

Up until now the time spent on this project was about 3 weeks and now half way through August so i had reasonably good weather to work in. We gave the border a good digging over and gave it a nice straight line using the method of stretching a length of string between 2 sticks " the same way a brickie would do when building a brick wall " close to the ground. Around the border we have a camellia shrub that was bought several years ago at an earlier attempt to spruce up the garden along with a few rose bushes, but they were left to fend for themselves but the rose bushes were cropped down to the stump. Some knowledge was gained to looking after some plants several years ago.

Chapter 4: Tiered Section

Buying The Materials

Building the tiered section at the top of the garden i wanted to erect a fence at the front of the section to act as a barrier. I visited my local diy store, WICKES, which had a good selection of garden fencing materials and i purchased several small fencing panels measuring about 15 inches high and a pot of brown wood protection and brushes. When we got them home, incidently we carried them home my brother and i, and we set about the task of painting all the panels with the brown wood protection. Just to emphasise a point here that the wood protection does 2 jobs, first is to protect the wood from weather and rotting also from woodworm and other garden pests and second the colour will enhance the final finish at the end of the job.

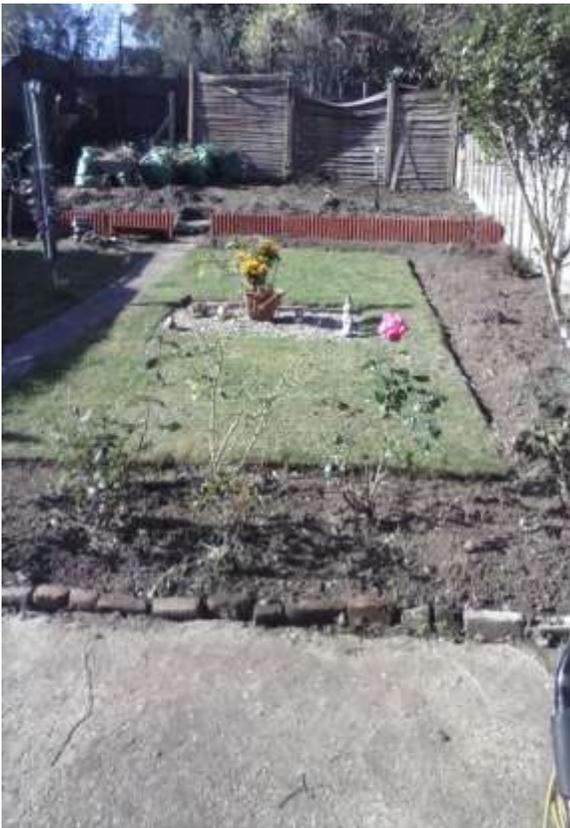


Leveling Tiered Area.

were dry to erect a nice straight fence at the base of the tier. The panels had longer parts at either ends so they At this point the tiered area had to be dug over to be leveled out . It was quite steep at one end with small shallows, and a flat area where the old shed once stood. We used the old string between 2 stickes method again to make a straight at the front of the tier .Now i suppose that this sounds like a bit of hard work but the old saying you only get out of it what you put into it. The effort is well worth it. We had to wait until the painted fence panels can be incerted into the ground.

Dry Overnight

We let the panels dry overnight and the next day we set about placing them into the ground. At this point i could foresee the general shape and pattern of how the garden is going to be and the more the job progresses the more you are inspired to continue, i even made a rough sketch of the garden and drew in the improvements, it all looked pretty impressive.



Building The Steps

I left a small gap in the fence on purpose to build a few steps up to the tier. I bought a few cheap items from my WICKES store, and proceeded to incorporate the finish to the steps. The items consisted of bamboo log rolls and 3x 18inch square paving stones. The bamboo log rolls are bendy and pliable and they formed a small wall around the base of the steps and the paving stones were placed on top. On completion i thought it looked quite eye catching.

The End Fence

The fence at the far end of the garden needed some renovation. We thought about replacing it with a new one but it was cheaper to add parts to it to modernise it. So we bought a bamboo wicker fence and attached it to the fence, so now the far end of the garden has a wicker fence backdrop. the effect was quite good. We secured it to the original fence to hide the imperfections it had.



The Last Of The Debris

The next stage was to get rid the last of the green waste sacks. All the weeds and foliage that was cut from the back of the fence was put into the rest of the sacks. These were then put into the street for the council to collect. Then i decided to order one of those green waste containers from the council. They cost £20 to buy but you have to pay £50 for the year to register to have it

collected. Then any weeding and unwanted foliage would then be disposed of on a fortnightly collection.



Chapter 5: The Greenhouse

Need a Greenhouse

I decided that we needed a greenhouse because it will coincide with our gardening plans. I wanted to grow most of my plants from seeds after a recent visit to my local garden centre. They had a huge selection of seeds and bulbs and so i knew that was the path i wanted to take. I saw a few programmes on Youtube and i was hooked on the idea. My local garden centre is called SQUIRES and i started to take regular visits looking around and looking at how the plants would look when fully grown. I thought i will soon have them displayed in my garden. By the way it is cheaper buying the seeds than it is to buy the full grown plant. I bought some in advance ,Tomato,Marygold, Aster and snapdragons.

Decide To Buy

We have now moved half way into September and i started looking on line at various greenhouses. There are the solid wooden structures with real glass or the aliminum type with polycarbon plastic panes. They ranged from several hundred pounds stirling down to about £100. We decided on the aluminum type. We saw one on Ebay and decided it looked okay. I had to measure the part of the garden where it was going and to analyse how the other plans would fit in. We wanted to be 6ft by 6ft at the base and in the centre of the tiered section. The Ebay greenhouse came in several sizes and 6ft by 6ft was perfect, total price £140.00, so we ordered it and it would take about a

week to deliver

Keeping Tidy

So for the next several days we set about the task of keeping the garden tidy, general weeding and and keeping the lawn mowed. It is surprising how fast weeds grow. You can dif them out with a hoe or use a general weed killer. We started to introduce some various plants to the garden. These were some small shrubs of various kinds but still in thier infant stage. On the left side if the garden we started an heather patch between the lawn and the tiered section. They are cheap to buy and can bring a cirtain charm to any garden.



Chapter 6: Building The Greenhouse

Greenhouse Delivered

We eventually recieved our greenhouse from ebay. It arrived in kit form so it had to be assembled. The weather was not too good out side, raining and windy so we opened the package in our living room and checked all the parts by laying the parts out on the floor to check that we had everything. We were able to assemble some of the parts together and assessed where they all joined . We spent the best part of 2 hours putting them in thier sets and labeling them.

We couldn't construct it any further until we got the assembled parts into the garden, so we had to wait until the next day.

Assemble the Frame

The following day the weather was more in our favour. So we moved all the parts outside to the patio end of the garden and completed the frame. Up until this point we could only assemble the frame but could not yet insert the polycarbonate panels. All the frame parts were only assembled loosely and had to be tightened up at the end. Next we had to assemble the base. The base was made out of galvanized steel and all the parts bolted together to make a 6ft x 6ft frame with a 15inch prong on each corner. These will eventually be inserted into the ground and reinforced with concrete to make a strong staple base to secure the greenhouse onto.

Nice and Level

We gave the area for the greenhouse another dig over and a few rakings to make it nice and level. We positioned the base where it will be finally secured and spent some time using a spirit level to set it nice and even. I would like to emphasize here that if any one out there wants to apply this in their future gardening plans not to rush this bit and try to do a nice job as all this effort affects the final result on completion.

Complete the Base

The sprongs in the 4 corners are face down and holes are dug for them to protrude below ground level. Prior to this I bought a few bags of quick dry cement to pour into the holes to secure the base. Once we were satisfied with the position of the base, I mixed the cement and applied it to the base area. Although we are using quick dry cement it still needs about a full hour to set rock hard. So we left the base in place with the cement for a few hours and had a bit of a rest but also quite eager to return and continue.

Testing the Base

Later that afternoon I checked the base and the cement had set rock hard. I tested the base by trying to lift it slightly but it was quite sturdy and set firmly in the ground. We then checked the greenhouse frame and tightened all the nuts and bolts that locked the frame together and afterwards we had a solid structure. My brother and I then carried the frame over to the base, being aluminum it was very light but strong, remember it has not yet got the

polycarbon panes in yet, and secured it to the base with specially designed brackets. We then placed the polycarbon panels into place and they were secured in place by some W shaped steel springs.

Warm Inside

It was now the first week into october and and it was still reasonably warm outside. Stepping into the greenhouse after completion you could feel the warmth that it generated,especially when the late afternoon sun shone through. Then i knew that this is going to be a mojour help for my future gardening plans.



Chapter 7: Autumn

Days Getting Shorter

At this point in the gardening plan, it is now autumn and you are limited to

things doing in the garden. We have now cropped back the rose bushes, you can crop them back quite low, and doing routine weeding. The daylight hours were getting shorter but every day you will find yourself going into the garden to marvel at what you have accomplished so far. In reality when you get involved in the garden this way there is no such thing as nothing to do. Check to see if the lawn wants the last mow of the season, usually by October, after which there will be a lull in its growth. Clear away any last weeds and just keep all your gardening tools locked away after use to eliminate them rusting.

Taking Photos

could look back to see how it looked at the beginning and what we achieved so far. It really does give you a lot of inspiration and all these little plans start popping up in your head. you just say to yourself " *Roll on the Spring*". I looked up online for various shrubs and flowers etc that might look good for the future so i could familiarise myself with certain types. Any new construction now will continu We started taking photo's of our progress and some short video's, so we e in the new year.

Chapter 8: A New Year

January 2016

We are now into the new year and the second week of January 2016, and i starten to inspect the garden to see what the winter ravages had brought forth. The garden had remained pretty much how we left it. It was nice to see that our efforts had paid off. There was a bit of light weeding to do around the border of the lawn and a little bit on the tiered section, but none of the harsh landscape that we often saw. Looking at our past efforts saw that we were establishing a good ground base to work with. It makes you eager to get started on the next stage.

Flower Seeds

I wanted to start growing some flower seeds that i bought last year but the greenhouse was a bit too cold to use for now. I was given a propagator by my brother for christmas, so i bought a small bag of compost and started to grow my tomato seeds indoors. Within a week they started germinating and you could see a few small seedlings sprouting out of the soil. If none of you have ever watched new seedlings sprouting it has a strange curiosity, and each day

you start to see more pop up, so you act like a carer by daily watering them and watching them grow. One of the problems that i encountered is that they get long and leggy because there is not sufficient light for them. Unfortunately the first ones sown did not survive long. So i decided to wait until i could start sowing more seeds in the greenhouse where the light is adequate and more warmer days.

Chapter 9: New Fence

Buying a Fence

It is now the last week of february and we decided that we had to replace that tired old fence on one side of the garden. It has been up there for quite a long time and it has been through everything that the weather could throw at it. One part just before the heather patch had completely fallen apart and there is a large gap leading from our garden into our neighbours garden. There is a vast amount of creeping weed that had grown over it and to continue with the theme of brightening up the garden it has to be replaced. I visited my local WICKES store again and checked thier fence panels. I wanted 6ft x 6ft panels, posts and support spikes to hold the posts in the ground. I ordered 5 panels and 6 posts along with the support spikes. I t cost me about £200.00 altogether. I arranged for them to be delivered to my address a few days later.



The Delivery

The day of delivery came and it was a reasonably sunny day. It is now into early March and the new fence panels and parts was delivered and left in our front garden. My brother and i carried them round to the back garden and seperated the panels ,posts and spikes into seperate piles. Our first job is to paint the panels with the brown wood preservative. This was going to be the main job of the day. We took a panel each and painted 1 side and put it aside to let it dry in the sun. This took about 2 hours to complete 1 side of each panel. We didnt rush this part because the finished product will enhance the garden at the end. We took a lunch break while the panels were drying, and after about an hour they were quite dry. So we commenced with the other side of the panels and after we completed the task we decided that was all we could do for today. We will continue in the morning by taking down the old fence.

Neighbours Informed

We had previously told our neighbour of our plan to erect a new fence and he was completely happy with it seeing as a new fence would benefit both of us, he even went half with the cost which was much appreciated. Even though we look at it as our fence and also a lesson to any one out there about to undertake a job like this check that it is not upsetting local residents. Some neighbours can look upon your work with dasapproval and complain to the local authority if they feel it is interfering with thier garden or property.

Dismantle Old Fence

The next morning we were up early with the feeling of eagerness to continue the job. We went out in the garden early and started to dismantle the old fence. It came apart quite easy because of it's present condition. Some of the posts were still usable and the old metal spikes that were holding them in place, but the old panels were completely rotten. We piled the debris into a small pile and cleared away any weeds and overgrown bramble that had grown along where the fence had been. When we had finished there was a large clear gap between our garden and my neighbours garden.



Straight Line

We used the straight string method again to get a reasonably straight line down the centre separating the 2 gardens and cleared away any stones, weed and bramble to make sure we had a clear straight line as a guide. There is one part of the original fence still standing that is still rigid and strong and it is supporting the gates into the respective gardens. This is the situation again that requires a bit of patience to get a good result, otherwise as you construct the new fence, it could all go bow shaped and finish up with a very crooked fence.

The Construction

We dug a hole at the end of the fence and proceeded to knock the first supporting spike into the hole so that the top part is sticking out of the ground, and filled in the gap around the spike with the loose earth and this made the holding spike strong and staple. We then put the first post into the holding

spike, and this is tightened by 2 knut and bolts that is joined to the holding spike,so our first post is up. On the fence panels we screwed some joining brackets that will fix the panels onto the posts. We then got the first panel and screwed it onto the first post via the holding bracket and now we have our first panel connected. At this point with only the first post and panel up you could visualize the finished product and how it will transform your garden into your future eden.

Visual Effect

I have seen many pictures in books or online where people have constructed their fence and that brown look certainly adds the appeal. As we constructed the rest of the fence you could see the visaul effect that it was creating. We left the posts in their natural pine wood as thay are 4 by 4 and quite robust. As it neared completion it set quite a contrast with the tiered section and the greenhouse. It set about the idea that in the summer we can put hanging baskets with flower displays mounted on the posts. Along the length of the fence we will plant some shady shrubs,seeing that the sun will be behind the fence for the first part of the morning. It really gets your imagination going when you have something nice as a decent backdrop for new plants.

Completed Fence

We continued on with the job with the next post followed by a panel until finally we reached the end of the garden. This took us about 3 hours to complete, but you will always come accross a few snags along the way, like roots underground that you hafe to clear when you drive the holding stakes down etc. This is the occasion again where a bit of hard graft comes into situation, maybe a few blisters. I recomend you to wear a pair of heavy duty working gloves as you tackle the fence. The finished job looks very stunning and you have transformed your garden visually 100% already.

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