

For the gardener who has everything...

Bored with giving your green-fingered loved one a packet of seeds or garden centre gift voucher? Mandy Bradshaw has been searching out some interesting alternatives

Potting tables

Sowing seeds, potting on and pricking out seedlings are a regular job for gardeners and now they can do it in style with a beautiful potting table from Gravel Hill Designs.

This family run firm, based in Henley-in-Arden, produces sturdy wooden tables and potting cupboards using timber from sustainable forests. Traditional construction methods give them a solid feel and careful weatherproofing means they can withstand anything the British climate throws at them.

Each piece is hand-painted and there is a choice of colours, while there are three styles of handle available for the cupboard.

Such is their appeal the firm has started producing a similar range for use indoors.

"People were saying 'I'd love one for my kitchen'," explains Paul Wiseman, who runs the firm with his son, Chris, "so we've started doing butchers' blocks."

The potting tables start at £199 and range from a simple table with open storage and hooks for hanging tools, which comes in two sizes, to a dresser-style table with shelves above. In addition, the firm makes three-tiered steps for displaying plants.

For more information,
call 07772 435547, or visit
www.gravelhilldesigns.co.uk



Potting table by Gravel Hill Designs.
Three-tiered steps by Gravel Hill Designs.



Hans Haverkamp.

Flower workshops

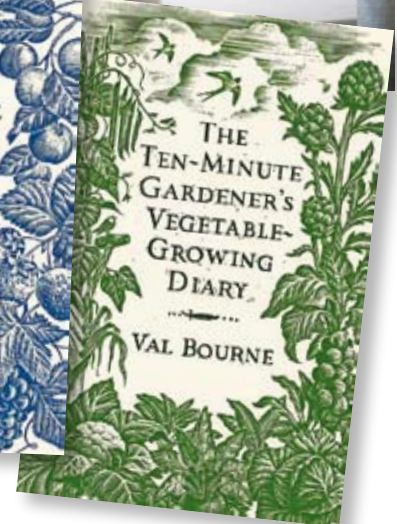
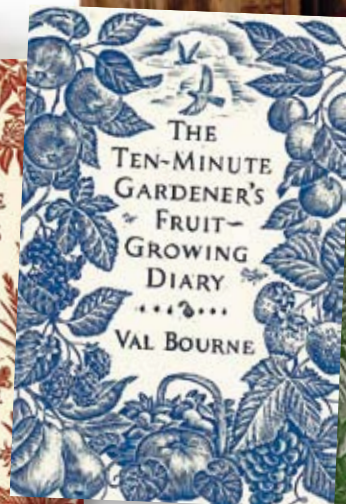
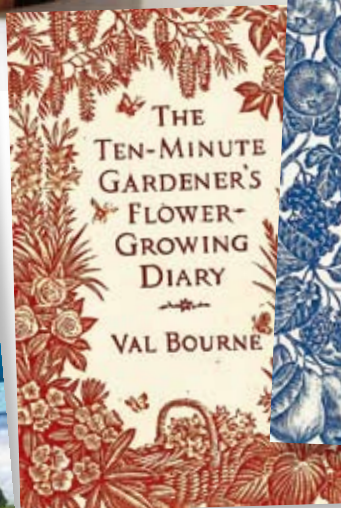
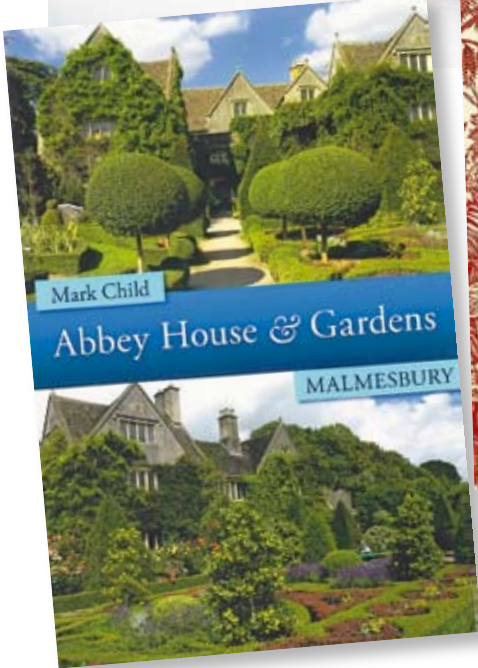
If you've ever envied those who can turn a simple bunch of flowers into an art form, then a course with leading florist Hans Haverkamp could be the answer.

Dutch-born Hans, whose list of clients includes Lord Andrew Lloyd-Webber, runs regular workshops in Twynning, near Tewkesbury. These range from creating stunning autumn designs using berries and fruit through to making a hand-tied bouquet.

His Christmas workshops this year, which run through December, include one on door wreaths, using blue spruce and natural decoration, producing a contemporary winter wall hanging on a silver birch panel and creating a mantelpiece or sideboard arrangement with candles, blue spruce, eucalyptus and flowers, chosen to ensure they last through the festive season.

He is also planning to run his popular course for a design based around a pair of chunky candlesticks, with a colour palette of deep

Festive floral decoration by Hans Haverkamp.



Books

cranberry, copper and caramel.

“It will have crab apples and tiny baubles,” he explains. “It looks like a designer piece but they are really easy to make.”

Each workshop includes all flowers, materials, tuition and refreshments and they run from 9.45am to 12 noon or 6.45pm to 9pm. Gift vouchers are available.

For more information,
call 07818 040312, or visit
www.hansflowers.co.uk

When the weather's too bleak to garden curling up with an inspirational book is the next best thing.

Cotswold author and photographer Mark Child has just published a guide to one of the area's most popular gardens, Abbey House in Malmesbury.

Packed with photographs of the garden throughout the year, the book explores the history of the house, the buildings that have been on the site and the people who lived in them.

Abbey House is known for its eye-catching displays – there are around 450 different varieties of tulips – and the book explores each season in the garden.

It tells how the now world-famous

‘Naked Gardeners’ got their name and what naturism means to Ian and Barbara Pollard, creators of the gardens.

Published by Amberley Publishing, Abbey House & Gardens is priced at £16.99 and is available from bookshops.

If more practical information is what you need, then the ‘Ten-minute’ books by Cotswold-based author Val Bourne should fit the bill.

Based on decades of personal experience as an organic gardener, the books, published by Bantam Press at £9.99, are aimed at those who are forced to garden in snatched moments.

The series includes The Ten-Minute Gardener's Fruit-Growing Diary, The Ten-Minute Gardener's Vegetable-Growing Diary and The Ten-Minute ▶

Gardener's Diary, which outlines key tasks for each month, which plants to grow for maximum colour and interest year-round and how to keep your garden healthy.

"It's full of tried and tested tips from a seasoned old hand and is the perfect answer to a prayer," explains Val, who contributes regularly to the *Daily Telegraph*.

Meanwhile, for those who want help with getting the best plant combinations she has written *Colour in the Garden*, which offers advice on how to improve planting and ensuring a colourful show lasts longer than one season. It is published by Merrell and retails at £18.95.

Gardening courses

From container gardening and propagation to kitchen gardening for beginners and garden design, The Cotswold Gardening School has something to suit everyone from complete novices to seasoned gardeners.

The school, run by Caroline Tatham, is based at her historic home near Slimbridge. Caroline, a qualified lecturer who also runs a busy design practice, offers workshops, morning sessions, day-long courses and more intensive 10-week courses.

Workshops, which cost £35 and include all materials, cover subjects such as Christmas wreath making and Mothers' Day planters and Caroline stresses that individualism is encouraged.

"I'm passionate about people having the opportunity to discover their creativity."

Morning classes, £50 to include refreshments, offer the chance to get professional advice on your own garden be it help with planning a vegetable plot, or solving a problem area.

Day courses, £95 with lunch, range from planning and planting borders and low maintenance gardening to achieving colour all year round and the essentials of gardening.

For those with more time, the four-day and 10-week courses cover gardening for beginners, professional planting and the chance to design your own garden.



Cotswold Gardening School.



Caroline Tatham with her award at the Chelsea Flower Show.

Prices range from £355 to £850.

Caroline, who is currently renovating her own nine-acre garden, believes the best way to learn is in a relaxed atmosphere with hands-on experience.

"It's quality learning in a fun and friendly relaxed atmosphere."

For more information, call 01453 899018, or visit www.cotswoldgardeningsschool.co.uk



Silver acorn jewellery by James Hyde.

Jewellery

Silversmith James Hyde draws inspiration from the plants and flowers around his Forest of Dean home for his unusual jewellery.

James, a professional gardener, produces pendants and cufflinks using acorns gathered in the forest.

Individual moulds are made from the acorns, making each solid silver piece unique.

James, who has been making jewellery for eight years, has had pieces bought as gifts for people in Canada, New Zealand and Australia.

"I get a buzz knowing they are going all over the place."

The pendants start at £90 and the cufflinks at £75 and they are available from Gloucester Cathedral, the Good News Centre, Newent and Forest Connections, Beechenhurst Lodge, or call 01594 560626.

For more details, visit www.hydesilver.co.uk



Antique tools from Garden and Wood.



The National Garden Scheme 'Yellow Book' token.

Yellow Book

There's nothing quite like visiting another garden to get inspiration and National Garden Scheme open days offer the perfect opportunity.

Thousands of gardens throughout the country take part in the scheme, which raises money for a variety of charities, including Macmillan Cancer Support, Crossroads Care and Marie Curie Cancer Care.

Gardens range from National Trust

properties and grand estates to tiny cottage plots and even allotments.

The national guide, or Yellow Book as it is affectionately known, gives full details of gardens, opening times and prices and will be available online or through bookshops priced at £9.99 from February.

Yellow Book gift tokens are available now online at www.ngs.org.uk costing £9.99, which includes postage and packaging.

You will be given a gift card with the token and the book will be sent direct to the intended recipient when it is published in February. The closing date for Christmas orders is Saturday, December 17.

Gardening antiques

Having the right tool always makes a job easier and gardening is no exception. Yet finding something that suits you can be challenging. Garden and Wood's range of one-off hand trowels, forks and

spades is a simple solution.

Sourced from private collections, car boot sales and trade fairs, the firm's stock of historic pieces are far removed from the factory produced modern tools.

"Variety is one of the reasons people should buy," explains Louise Allen, who runs the company with her partner Piers Newth. "There's more chance of finding something that fits you than if you buy from the 'one size fits all' mass producers."

The couple restore anything that is not in tiptop condition and items range from border forks to Victorian garden pots. They also sell garden furniture, cloches and rhubarb forcers and paper-based garden ephemera, such as old seed packets or nursery catalogues.

A selection of pieces can be found on the website www.gardenandwood.co.uk or call 01844 279170 to inquire about the full range, or make an appointment to visit the firm in Little Haseley, Oxfordshire. ■