

INSIDER INSIGHT

THE BASIC DESIGN PRINCIPLES YOU NEED TO KNOW TO CREATE AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

LAYOUT There are two possibilities in terms of layout. You can opt for a series of interactions with separate zones that stimulate each of the senses, such as sitting next to a pond or enjoying the sound of wind-rustled leaves. Or choose a multi-sensory experience where you engage with everything simultaneously, like walking along a gravel path bordered by colourful scented plants. Either way, it's important to include resting spots with seating so you can interact close up.

FRAGRANCE Choose plants with fragrance that drenches the air such as mock orange (philadelphus), roses, jasmine and honeysuckle, as well as the curry plant (*Helichrysum italicum*), which is beautifully scented on warm days. As an extra sensory layer include plants with scents that need to be experienced up close by brushing your fingers through them like lavender and scented geraniums, as well as herbs like rosemary, mint, sage and thyme, which need to be picked or crushed to release their aroma. Some plants have scented foliage, too, such as *Salvia* 'Dear Anja' and *Salvia* 'Amethyst' and *Monarda bradburiana* and *Monarda fistulosa*. Plant either side of a winding gravel path to get the most out of the experience.

TEXTURE From feathery planting and silky petals to smooth pebbles and polished stepping stones, as well as peeling bark and spongy moss, there is no better place than the sensory garden to explore touch. Choose plants with textured flowers, foliage, berries, seeds, bark and twigs. Walking barefoot across the lawn is a tactile experience that helps you reconnect with nature, while nothing is more soothing than letting your fingers dip into the trickling water from a fountain.

VISUAL DELIGHTS Colour is one of the easiest ways to create a visual story in your garden. Choose different flower forms and foliage, as well as appealing bark and stems, to create an engaging tapestry of different colours, shapes, textures and

patterns. Other eye-catching effects include dappled light reflections, trickling water, undulating Japanese cloud pruning and landscaping tricks like curved pathways leading to a slow-reveal destination.

THE EDIBLE GARDEN Stimulate your taste sensations by planting edible flowers, herbs and home-grown vegetables to make a taste garden that celebrates nature's bounty. Some of the more common edible flowers include rose petals, nasturtium and scented geraniums, with peony and camellia offering a slightly more unusual alternative.

SOUND EFFECTS Trickling water from a fountain, grasses rustling silkily against each other in the breeze, chiming wind sculptures and the crunch of a gravel path show how a range of diverse sounds can be included in the garden to heighten the sensory experience. Flowers that attract wildlife, such as native wild flowers, introduce the sound of buzzing bees and other insect pollinators.

WILDLIFE 'The greater the range of plants in a garden, the more wildlife it will attract,' say garden designers Charlotte Harris and Hugo Bugg of Harris Bugg Studio. 'Choosing a variety of heights, colours and flowering times of the year will fast-track your garden into a butterfly delight. Think about offering a pollinator buffet.' Introducing water – even just a small container such as a birdbath – will make a difference and will help your garden come alive with wildlife.

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AND BEAUTY ACROSS
THE SEASONS”**

ASA GREGERS-WARG, head gardener
at Beth Chatto's Plants and Gardens