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How to Prepare Your Garden for a House Sale

Buyers want pristine lawns, somewhere to relax and a vegetable patch

BY JAYNE DOWLE | ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON APRIL 23, 2019 | [THE TIMES](#)

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In Newark, Nottinghamshire, this six-bedroom house is £950,000 with Fine & Country



When B&Q asked its customers what makes the ideal British garden, they came up with a surprisingly quotidian list: 48ft long, south facing with a seating area, plenty of flowers and plants, and a vegetable plot.

There was nothing about an orchard of espaliered fruit trees, beds of roses or even a lush bowling-green lawn. These days, according to Simon Gresswell, a director at Finlay Brewer, a west London estate agency, his buyers are more impressed if the lawn has artificial turf, so that the garden can look perfect year-round with minimal effort.

Why is the garden such a big deal when it comes to buying and selling a home? Clearly, it has more to do with lifestyle factors than prestige or the chance to cultivate a prize-winning collection of peonies. "The average buyer wants their garden to come across as high maintenance, but would want it to be fairly low maintenance in reality," says Rupert Sweeting, the head of national sales at Knight Frank.



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This house in Dorchester, Dorset, is £7.5 million with Savills

Get it right for the market that you're aiming at and you could add up to 20 per cent to the value of your property, according to Axa, an insurer, which has surveyed UK buyer attitudes to gardens. It found that while the average household spends £473 a year on their outside space, the potential return could be four times that – an average uplift in value of £1,954.

In London, according to Foxtons estate agency, 62 per cent of buyers say that a garden is important to them, with 72 per cent confirming that they would pay more for a property with outdoor space. In some areas this could add a premium of up to £50,000. This desire is leading to some imaginative solutions.

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Victoria Farrar, an associate director at Cushman & Wakefield, says that at the Nine Elms regeneration scheme in southwest London developers are creating "gardens in the sky" and recruiting landscape gardeners to help with the challenge of greening up the urban space. At the Tipi build-to-rent scheme in Wembley, northwest London, designers have created rooftop and podium gardens with artificial lawns and power points, so that residents can work in the sun or host parties and barbecues.

Sara Ransom of Stacks Property Search, a property finder, says that there is a rise in demand for properties in garden squares. "These are increasingly popular among London buyers because they have the advantage of outside space, but none of the trouble of looking after it," she says. "This is of course particularly attractive to buyers who are part-time residents, older and prefer someone else to do the work, or just the mega-busy."

She says that while some of London's hundreds of garden squares expect residents to abide by draconian committee rules, others are more relaxed and "allow all the things you would expect to do in a garden: barbecues, parties, games, walking the dog, sending the children out to play".

The seven acres of Ladbrooke Square Garden in west London, which includes a rose arbour, football area, tennis court and a dog-friendly section, is one example. Anyone who lives within 100 yards of its railings can join, with each of the 650 members of the private trust that manages it paying £200-a-year towards its upkeep.

There does, however, come a time in many a city-dweller's life when they begin to wonder if the grass might be greener in a suburb or country village.

This is when priorities change, says Emma Seaton, a director at Prime Purchase, a buying agency. "Top of many people's wishlists is a bigger garden, more privacy, space for the children to play and make a noise without upsetting the neighbours, and allowing the family to get a dog," she says. "However, people often underestimate how much work and cost a very large garden involves. The upkeep can be considerable and if you need to hire a gardener, you need to factor that cost in."



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Stanway dining table, £2,370, and Cadiz chairs, £270 each (Neptune)

Nevertheless, this does not deter some would-be buyers, who agents say want a garden to include a combination of formal lawns, wooded space and a wilder, free-flowing area. There may also be a swimming pool and tennis court hidden from view of the house, and a kitchen garden to potter in, perhaps renovated from an ancient walled garden.

"This desire to be able to cultivate fruit and vegetables has become more prevalent on people's wishlists in recent years," says Edward Lucas, a director of Strutt & Parker's country house department.

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"Typically people moving out of London are in search of 'the good life' and will ask what can they achieve in their garden that they can't in the city."

Such buyers would relish the challenge of Athelhampton in Puddletown, near Dorchester in Dorset, a Tudor manor house set in nearly 30 acres of 19th-century gardens and grounds that has recently gone on the market for £7.5 million with Savills. Camilla Elwell, an associate director of Savills' country department, says that its history represents the opportunity to become the custodian of more than just a garden. "It's simply exquisite and one of the most magical houses in Dorset – steeped in history, but with 21st-century living in mind," she says.

Meanwhile, in the nation's back gardens, while built-in hot tubs, fancy fire pits, outdoor kitchens and pizza ovens

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jostle to add to that all-important aspirational lifestyle appeal, nothing impresses would-be buyers more than a humble, decent-sized shed. The property website Sell House Fast found that 82 per cent of estate agents and property experts voted it the feature most likely to add value.

The must-haves If your lawn is less than lush and your box trees need a trim, lift your garden's spirits – and impress potential buyers – with these handy tips.

Quick fixes Outdoor rug It's all about taking the indoors outside, so you could splurge on a gorgeous [Missoni Waipawa outdoor rug](#) in subtle coastal shades (£620, [amara.com](#)), or perk up your patio with one from [Modern Rugs](#) from less than £30.



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Aldi egg chair, £129

Cocoon chair The wedding can wait. Kick back and curl up in a cocoon chair. [Aldi](#) has a fabulous egg chair for £129.99 and [Squires Garden Centres has the Frampton](#), a cosy double hanging cocoon, for £499.

Cool lounge These days outdoor furniture has to be as comfortable as your favourite sofa and as stylish as your living room decor. A rattan [Lois lounge from Marks & Spencer](#) fits the bill at £149.



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Garden Gourmet cooker, with weatherproof cover, £2,499, (Chesneys)

Investments Outdoor kitchen The ultimate in al fresco entertaining has to be a fully functioning outdoor kitchen. A rustic [Morso Hut](#) starts at £4,995 from BMF Store and comes with the Forno Deluxe package, including oven, Tuscan grill, pizza peel and four stools with cushions.

Built-in fire pit/outdoor stove An hearth is the centrepiece of the modern garden. A stand-alone [rock-effect fire pit is £1,152 \(Paving Online\)](#) and adds warmth and a focal point to any entertaining space. Or choose a cosy outdoor stove. [Chesneys](#) has a good range from £1,249.

Summerhouse Whether traditional or modern, a summerhouse provides a garden hideaway for all ages. The contemporary [Vermont from Wayfair](#) is £781.99 and has bifold doors.

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