

Green

By Anne McKeon

Fingers



Nasturtiums in the kitchen garden to dress up some natural stone

Rock gardens have become very popular over the past number of years as they are a very effective way of creating a garden feature that is both colourful and pleasing to the eye for many months of the year. They also blend in very well with the natural landscape.

Rock gardening includes not only rockeries but also stone sinks, raised beds, scree/gravel beds and patio areas. In short, if there are rocks and stone involved then you are 'rock gardening'.

Rockeries are generally planted with alpine plants. These alpines are usually dwarf in size and vary quite a lot in colour and shape. In fact, the choice of plants is enormous and for small space gardening, alpines probably offer a greater range than other types of plants.

It is not necessary, believe it or not, to have a slope in order to form a rock garden. A flat site can be equally attractive when dressed with rocks and alpine plants. Raised beds are also very impressive, particularly if formed using natural stone while sink gardens are ideal where space is limited e.g. on a balcony or simply outside the back door or on the patio.

What a rockery is not is a mound of soil dumped in the corner with a few rocks thrown in for good measure. Avoid the 'currant bun' look. Nor is a rockery a heap of rubble thrown in the back corner of the garden (with a sprinkle of soil covering it as camouflage) after the house has undergone construction work. This is laziness not gardening. Remove the rubble and construct a proper rock garden in your own time. When you are constructing a rockery, aim to recreate what looks like a small corner of mountain. Ideally the eventual size of the rockery should be in proportion to the



A solo rock to add character to a bed



Planting through gravel can be very visually effective



Use rocks that are natural to the area



Raised beds add a new dimension to the garden



Trellising and window boxes are always useful in the garden and add height where a rockery may not be suitable



Among the rocks and stones in my garden

