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Interior designer Jenny Blanc reveals the impact beautiful window dressings can have on any room.

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Carefully combining style, practicality and a sense of balance can create a truly versatile kitchen-diner.

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A classically-built extension, orangery or conservatory can enhance the way you live within your home.

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Relish spring's warming embrace and meander through ancient orchards laden with apple blossom.

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Fresh, succulent crab is plentiful in April and is particularly delicious married with choux pastry.

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We pay tribute to Royal Crown Derby, the last name in English porcelain still to manufacture solely in this country.

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## ON THE COVER

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her front door. Her daughter, who was about five at the time, came out and gave them a long, admiring look before declaring: "Oh, mummy, it looks so lovely – just like a pub." Peonies, however, look gorgeous in any setting and *irises* work particularly well in a bunch.

When it comes to garden furniture, one has to think very carefully about what works. I have a hatred for anything plastic and find those strange mini marquees very off-putting indeed. Plastic day beds should really only be seen in public swimming baths and those rather strange sofas that look a little like giant cribs do not have a place in the English garden (they seem much more at home in Miami).

Wooden furniture painted in faded colours looks wonderful, particularly when dotted about a large garden. I am a romantic at heart, so love nothing more than a huge carpet dragged out into the garden and peppered with cushions. Hammocks are, of course, divine and Mr M and I have wiled away many happy hours reading books in a matching pair.

A gazebo is rarely a good idea and it is never wise to have a cart wheel propped up against the front of a house. It is, however, blissful to have a potting shed (Mr M spends many hours in his and, as I am never allowed in, I have no idea what goes on in there).

A terrace is wonderful, but must never on any account be called a patio. It is lovely to have some night-scented stock in pots. Also, *nicotiana* is rather divine and is probably the last bastion for smokers, so is good for those who like a sneaky puff.

Finally, a beautiful conservatory is a real addition to any garden, but better still is an orangery. Ours has a huge table and is among my favourite places to eat. But do not succumb to too many exotic hothouse flowers, such as *bougainvillea* trees or orchids. I think them rather showy. If you simply have to plant something foreign, then a *brugmansia* is beautiful and far less exuberant; like the local liqueur which seemed charming in a picturesque taverna by an aquamarine sea but quite vinegarish when back at home, some foreign imports simply don't transfer too well. ■



Every cherished garden needs a beautiful bench from which to admire it.  
Hatfield 5ft bench, £395, Neptune Classics



## AN AIR OF SOPHISTICATION

Reward your hard work tending to your garden with relaxing, elegant and stylish ways in which to soak up its splendour

### YOUR FAVOURITE SOFA AL FRESCO

Garden sofas are the ultimate in laid-back chic. Odd's Old Rocker (pictured above) is the perfect place in which to relax and enjoy all your efforts in the garden, and is handmade in England too. Its canvas is completely water-resistant and its frame made from stainless, so it can be left to adorn your garden throughout the spring and summer months.  
Faded red Original Old Rocker, £2,915, Odd Limited



### STORAGE CAN BE STYLISH

A cut above the ordinary common or garden shed, this pretty Gothic design from The Posh Shed Company makes quite a statement. It comes with a neat tiled roof and high-quality wood finish and is designed to stay dry inside and avoid rising damp. It is available in a range of colours and sizes to suit any garden.

Gothic shed in three sizes, from £1,533 for 6x4ft

### A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

An orangery is a wonderful way to enjoy a beautiful garden all year round but the design must be suitably sophisticated. I favour this beautiful option made from selected hardwoods.

Bespoke orangeries from £37,500, Henman Green

