



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT THE BRAZEN COLOUR COMBINATION OF DAHLIAS AND SALVIAS; FLAX (PHORMIUM 'CANDY STRIPE'); THE CLIMBING ROSE 'PEGGY MARTIN'; BEGONIAS ARE A MUST FOR LEAF PATTERN; A FAN PALM; FEATHERY NATAL RED GRASS; AEONIUM 'ZWARTKOP'



Land Of The Free

When it comes to the modern garden: no rules are the new rules, according to Franchesca Watson – so go wild

Last year was a rather long and frustratingly unpredictable one – political and economic challenges seemed to dog the entire world, all so serious. As a respite, our gardens and green spaces should be relaxing, and this year I intend to have a lot more general, everyday fun with the outdoors.

As such, I want plant combinations that make me smile. Seriousness and correctness are not on the agenda, instead I'm going to create a crazy, fun atmosphere in my green space – and laugh a lot more.

Maybe I harbour an inner hippy or 90s rock star but I'm going to indulge myself and respond instinctively to the shape and colour of plants. I'm going bold with everything and will aim to be brazenly light hearted.

I will be mixing it up: marigolds with grasses, roses and palms, cannas behind my salvias. In fact, all those plants that 'good taste' has been avoiding for years seem now to be the ones with personality: begonias, flax, mirror bush, petunias, dahlias, hibiscus. Clashing colour and intriguing texture are

paramount. Form plants really are big news: cordylines, agaves, euphorbias, tetrapanax, just about any succulent (the odder the better).

I'm going to festoon my pergola with orange *Pyrostegia venusta* clashing with a blue *Petrea*, plant Italian fan palms (*Chamaerops humilis*) with ground-cover roses, and mix irises with cotyledons – and plenty of wobbly, otherworldly clipped shapes.

I'm going to throw some local plants into the mix, but not unless they are stand-alone and fabulous: *Leonotis*, low aloes, lovely, bunching grasses, almost every bulb that occurs – especially *Crimums* and swathes of *Nerines* in vibrating colours.

I'm going to relax, forget all the rules and follow the crazy – there's something gobsmackingly glamorous about funkiness.

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