

COVER STORY

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How to go for growth in your back garden

A summer house can add space and value to your home — and you may not need planning permission, says Carol Lewis

Nearly 300 years ago, Queen Caroline — Caroline of Brandenburg-Ansbach, the wife of King George II — plucked a plot of land from Hyde Park and created a baroque-style garden containing all the must-haves of the day: landscaped gardens, a ha-ha, tree-lined avenues and a classical temple-like summer house.

Kensington Gardens wasn't only for Caroline's enjoyment however, it was open on Saturdays to anyone who was "respectably dressed". Today anyone, whatever their sartorial style, can walk the avenues and sit in Queen Caroline's Temple. While an increasing number of us have summer houses in our gardens, few of us would go so far as to call them temples.

To mark the arrival of the summer house as the modern-day must-have, the Serpentine Galleries, sponsored by Northacre, the developer, is to stage a summer house architectural exhibition. Four architects, none of whom have had a permanent building constructed in England, have each been asked to design a 25 sq m summer house inspired by Queen Caroline's Temple.

Kunlé Adeyemi's summer house is an inverse replica of Queen Caroline's Temple; Barkow Leibinger's creation is inspired by an 18th-century pavilion designed by Caroline's architect (William Kent) which rotated to offer 360-degree views of the park; Yona Friedman's is a modular structure that can be assembled and disassembled; and Asif Khan's

design is inspired by the way in which Caroline's Temple catches the sunlight from The Serpentine lake.

It is timely that the exhibition will celebrate creativity in the design of summer houses because there are those who believe that the summer house/garden room/home office has become a tad dull in recent years.

John Keenan, the managing director of Rooms Outdoor, a garden room manufacturer, says: "The style is dictated by planning rules and box shapes have become the default because the stringent planning requirements have taken away creativity. You can still have tall, pitched roofs but you would need planning permission and people don't want the hassle."

Permitted development rights mean that most people — aside from those living in listed buildings and conservation areas — can install a garden room without planning permission as long as they meet some standard requirements. These include:

- being single storey; if within 2m of a property boundary then no higher than 2.5m; located at least 1m from property boundaries; and to the rear of the property and not covering more than half of the garden. They cannot be self-contained, living accommodation — granny annexes do need planning permission and are governed by different rules (see panel, right).

Not all are lacking in design inspiration, however. Chris Sneesby's garden office design, in which he wanted to fuse sculpture and office, spawned his business, Archipod. One reviewer described the distinctive cedar-clad pods (which cost from £15,000) as "the bastard offspring of a traditional garden shed and a lunar landing module".

Regardless of design, function is surprisingly uniform. Keenan says his clients, who pay between £14,582 (for a 10 sq m room) and £26,825 (for 20 sq m), primarily use them as office space, followed by dens and gyms. The home office in the garden is nothing new — after all, George Bernard Shaw, Roald Dahl and Rudyard Kipling all worked in garden sheds — although today, with



Palewell Park, a six-bedroom house in East Sheen, London, is for sale at £2.195 million with Savills, and has a studio that is used as an office at the end of the garden

computers and wi-fi, they are increasingly sophisticated additional living spaces.

"People are staying where they are because of the cost of stamp duty, the cost of extra rooms and a desire to stay near schools and friends. Some have exhausted other options, such as extensions and loft conversions, and don't want the added expense of a basement dig," Keenan explains.

Estate agents suggest that it is an investment worth making. Rupert Lawson Johnston, the head of Strutt & Parker's office in Chichester, says: "A particularly spectacular summer house, depending on size and use, will add value of about 5 to 10 per cent to your property because it will instantly make the garden space look more attractive and practical. It can make your property stand out, which is useful if you live in a terraced property or in a city where space is at a premium. It can be a big expense at first, but long term you will recoup your investment."

A survey by Savills suggests that a garden room will add 15 to 20 per cent to the value of a house worth between £1 million and £1.5 million in London,



The Cuberno garden studio (from £21,948) by Rooms Outdoor, above and on the cover, is inspired by the architect Le Corbusier. Brockdale Cottage, a five-bedroom house in Warfield, Berkshire, is on sale for £3 million with Strutt & Parker. Its grounds include a barn, inset left, designed for summer entertaining

and 5 to 15 per cent to a house worth between £500,000 and £1 million outside the capital.

Garden rooms are not always a bid for extra space by people who don't want to move. Developers are increasingly adding them to new homes. Two styles are common: the home office above a garage, as seen in Hill's development at Ninewells in Cambridge (prices start at £1.05 million for a four-bedroom house with separate studio, for sale through Bidwells); and the single-storey home office at the end of a townhouse garden, as seen in Chester Row's boutique development, Charles Baker Place, in Wandsworth (prices start at £2.95 million for a five-bedroom house with a garden studio, for sale through Knight Frank).

Nick Herrtage, the director of Chester Row, says: "With the three large houses at Charles Baker Place, we had the choice of extending the lawn by an extra few metres or building an individual self-contained space that the owners would have the option to use as an office, kids' room or a teenage den. What we have delivered would be ideal for someone wanting to work from home but at the same time wanting to escape the hurly-burly of the family, while being only seconds away from the house." It's not all about urban living, either.



This garden office (from £21,595), designed by Green Studios, is clad in cedar boards, has a sedum roof and incorporates a bike shed



Custom-made cabinetry in the Goodman Penthouse at Berkeley Group's Goodmans Fields development in Aldgate, London

The return of bespoke joinery

At first glance, the duplex penthouse apartment at the Artisan development in the smart neighbourhood of Fitzrovia, in London, is clutter-free; there is nothing to disturb the clean lines and free-flowing spaces of the home, which has a streamlined "architectural" look. Yet appearances can be deceiving — hidden behind cleverly concealed doors, this flat contains a large amount of bespoke joinery in the shape of cupboards, other furniture and room-divider units.

Specialist carpentry is becoming more common in new, high-end homes and also in the renovations of older properties, in a trend being driven by open-plan living. People want ways to separate areas of open spaces. They also want somewhere to put their stuff — living with minimal possessions may be something some people can achieve, but most of us need things.

Another reason why people are commissioning bespoke furniture is to create a home office or a study. Not everyone has a garden big enough for a summer house that doubles as an office (see article, left). The price of a piece of bespoke joinery starts at about £3,500, but some people are prepared to spend

as much as £60,000 on one room.

At the Artisan flat, the dining room adjoins the kitchen but the two spaces can be separated — by a "pocket" door that slides into the walls. However, perhaps the most clever piece of bespoke joinery is the unit that sits between the master bedroom and the en suite bathroom. It contains a two-way open fireplace, plus a cabinet to hide the television, but the unit also has two doors on either side. When these are shut, it creates a hallway that provides access to the flat's main balcony for guests. They no longer need to walk through the bedroom.

"We wanted the look to be architectural and we were able to keep it that way by using bespoke carpentry," says Katherine Neathercoat, the head of interiors at Rolfe Judd Interiors, the architect that designed the flat. All the joinery was made by the Hertfordshire-based furniture-maker Tagg.

Prices for the one and two-bedroom apartments at the Artisan scheme start at £1 million. The development, by Dukelease, takes in one existing building and four new-builds on Goodge Street.

Developers say that they are spending more of their budgets on bespoke joinery and are opting to use the same manufacturer to create continuity.



The cupboards and shelving, above and inset left, are handcrafted and made to measure by Neville Johnson

"When we work on £10 million-plus homes, we want the joinery to have a uniform colour and grain so that the cabinetry matches the architraves, doors and skirting boards," says Joe Burns, of Oliver Burns, the interior design and development company. "Every tiny detail counts at this end of the market." He says that he uses bespoke joinery to integrate technology, such as audio and visual systems, and to cover the grilles of air-conditioning vents. Neathercoat says that buyers love cabinetry. "It is all about the end user — the buyer — and people are really delighted by it."

Behind the rise of bespoke joinery in older properties lies a demand from homeowners for storage that suits their requirements. The bespoke manufacturer Neville Johnson says that furniture for the bedroom makes up 50 per cent of its business, but demand for living room and study furniture is growing. Method, a workshop and design studio in West Lothian, makes privately commissioned trunks to store items such as malt whisky and watches.

Simon Tcherniak, a senior designer at Neville Johnson, says a colleague designed a wall unit for a customer that has become a popular design. It has curved cupboards and a series of square shelves designed to display ornaments and a television. Tcherniak says: "It is expensive but buyers understand they have to pay more for custom-made pieces."



Sleek bespoke cabinets conceal kitchen equipment and allow for clean lines in this penthouse apartment in Dukelease's Artisan development in Fitzrovia, London

Why the granny annexe could go out of style

The new stamp-duty rules for second homes and buy-to-lets are to have unexpected consequences for people who own a home with a self-contained annexe or "granny flat".

Under the chancellor's new regime, which came into force last week, an annexe could be classified as a "second home" and thus subject to the extra 3 per cent stamp duty. The Treasury has confirmed that the tax applies to the entire property — main house and annexe — but only if the annexe is a separate dwelling with a value in excess of £40,000 and could, in theory, be bought as a third-party home.

Summer houses used as garden rooms or offices are not implicated. However, families buying homes with separate accommodation for an elderly relative face paying the tax.

"Buyers may ask sellers to drop the price of their property by 3 per cent," says John Fisher, head of the country department at Sotheby's International. As a result, sellers are likely to remove bathrooms and kitchens, so the dwelling is not classified as an annexe, or make it part of the main property.

There are more than 33,000 granny annexes in England and Wales. Claire Carponen