Using the Internet for...

Gardening

Using the Internet for **Gardening**

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Lifesteps offers you a range of online and printed guides. Written by staff from Irish public libraries, each guide contains easy to follow, step by step explanations of how to use the Internet to achieve a specific goal or 'life step.'

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Note: words in red appear in the glossary at the end of this module.

Introduction

The Internet contains vast amounts of information and it can be difficult to know where to start when looking for information on a specific topic. This guide is intended to be a starting point if you are interested in gardening and would like to find out what resources are available on the Internet.

Sites are selected which help with planning a garden, choosing plants and buying them online. The sites chosen are reputable, up-to-date and the advice is given in an easy-to-read and easy-to-navigate format. The majority of the sites used are based in Ireland or the UK, as the advice given or plants sold on these sites suit our climate. The location of a website also has implications when it comes to buying online as it can affect delivery areas and delivery costs. Shopping online can offer a greater variety than you may find locally. Buying online is not possible on all of the websites, however, the websites are also useful as a source of information on the latest products available.

Online gardening clubs/bulletin boards/forums are one area where the Internet offers a unique service – gardeners can share their knowledge and experience and get help with problems from others easily over the Internet.

The listing of additional websites at the end of the guide gives an indication of the amount of information on all aspects of gardening and the number of gardening organisations who have a presence on the Internet.

Need to know

A basic familiarity with a computer and the Internet is required.

Need to have

Access to a PC

For online ordering:

- a credit card (if you intend to order online)
- an email address
- a delivery address where goods can be accepted during working hours.

Related Guides

'Internet basics'
'Using the Internet for… Shopping'

Quick guide

The guide works its way from the planning and design aspects of your garden to choosing suitable plants for it. Having chosen the plants, there are a number of websites where plants, seeds, bulbs, lawn seed, roses and shrubs can be purchased online. In the "gardening for produce" section there are links to websites where you can buy vegetable seeds and plants, fruit trees, herb plants, pears and apple trees, cherry trees and organic seeds.

There are also links to websites with further information and advice on gardening as well as an online gardening club. Finally, there are links to online gardening bulletin boards and forums.

At the end of the guide there are links to additional websites, covering commercial sites, advice sites, and sites on gardens to visit.

Step-by-Step Guide

Gardening for pleasure

Planning and designing your garden

When planning a new garden or improving an existing garden, there are a number of basic things which will affect the design:

- Site aspect, space, time and cost
- Who will use the garden? Children, pets, older generation, disabled users, etc.
- How you use the garden? Do you want beds full of colourful plants, grass on which to play football with children, an outdoor entertaining area or a combination of all of the above?
- The amount of time available to maintain the garden also influences choice of layout and plants.

www.garden.ie has an excellent section on garden design. Click on the link **garden design** on the left hand side of the screen.

Under each aspect of garden design there are different subsections, e.g. town gardens, large front gardens, non-plant features, etc.

To look at any section in more detail click on the links you want to read

There are also some good design ideas and things to remember when planning a garden on www.flower-gardening-made-easy.com/gardendesign.html

The links under the heading for **Garden planning information**, at the bottom of this page, may also be helpful.

This is an American website so all of the books recommended may not always be available to purchase in Ireland – however they may be available to purchase online.

Choosing plants

When choosing plants the following are the main considerations: light, moisture, temperature, wind, soil type. Choose plants which suit your conditions. Some plants called 'hardy plants' will thrive pretty much anywhere. However, 'tender' plants need more care and attention. It is good to have different points of interest in a garden. Choosing plants which flower at different times of the year, or plants with coloured foliage or whose foliage changes colour, will help achieve this.

For help deciding on plants see:
www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/how_to_be_a_gardener/
Click on **Know your plot**. There is a list of plants suitable for each soil type under this section. Choose the type of plant you want from the **Plant Lists** section on the right-hand side of the screen.

Buying plants

Once you have decided what plants you want in your garden, it is possible to buy them online. When ordering online remember:

• companies may not deliver plants outside the country in which the website is based as there are restrictions on sending rooted items. Check in the **terms and conditions** page before ordering

• generally bulbs and seeds can be sent worldwide – always check delivery charges

• some companies have a minimum order quantity or minimum order value.

When buying online, also remember that the items available are influenced by the season i.e. bulbs will be available to buy at the time of year they should be planted.

Plants, Seeds, Bulbs

There are many interesting and useful sites that allow you to buy plants, seeds and bulbs online. One such example, www.mrmiddleton.com, is a one stop shop as they have plants, seeds, bulbs and plants available and is based in Dublin. Orders can be placed online.

Seeds – you can order seeds from the above website or through Thompson Morgan direct using www.seeds.thompson-morgan.com Click on **Online Seed Catalogue** – **Worldwide Delivery** – then select **Ireland** from the drop down list

There is a **SEARCH Flowers** link on the left hand side of the page.
On this you can search by plant type or by area where you wish to plant, e.g. bedding, borders, etc.

Bulbs

For information on bulb usage see www.langeveld.com. Click on **Bulb Usage**.

Langeveld do not sell online to the general public but this website gives great information on what is available.

Tulips

www.tulipworld.com Online ordering available. This website has a lot of information about tulips. Scroll down the homepage to see **About Bulbs**, **Bulb Encyclopaedia**, **Inspire Me**, **Organic Bulbs**.

Under **Bulb Encyclopaedia**, the **Bulb Advisor** link helps you select bulbs by soil, climate, colour, etc.
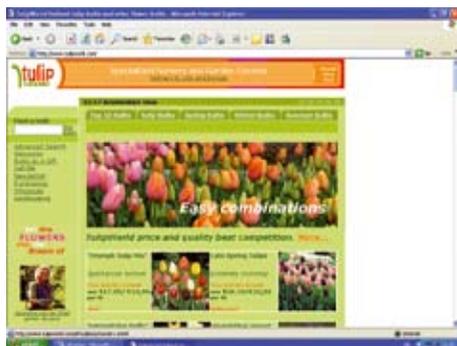
www.gardensupplydirect.co.uk – order online for flower bulbs and other garden supplies. Click on **More info** under the flower bulbs heading to view the full selection.

Lawns

Decide how it will be used. Is it ornamental or multi functional – the grass seeds or turf chosen should reflect the use(s) of the lawn. The amount of time available to maintain the lawn will influence the lawn size.

For information on designing and planning a lawn see:
www.lawnandmower.com/lawn-design.aspx
This website also contains lots of information on looking after a lawn.

For lawn planning and sowing see:
www.garden.ie/Pages/gardening-know-how/index.html?section=Lawns

Roses

www.davidaustinroses.com/english/ To order online click on **Search for Roses and Ordering**, on the left-hand side of the screen.
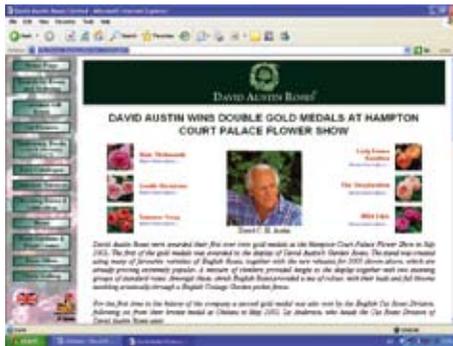
Trees

For some guidelines on planting trees see:
www.bordbia.ie/consumers/plants_flowers/trees.htm

www.futureforests.net This company is based in Cork and sells bare root trees, shrubs and climbers by mail order. Click on **Bareroot lists** or **Container lists** along the top of the home page to view lists and prices.

Shrubs

www.treesbypost.co.uk Online ordering. Click on **Trees** or **Shrubs** on the left hand side of screen to see list of items available.

Further information/advice

www.garden.ie. Click on **Garden know-how** on the left hand side of screen. It is sub-divided in to different sections e.g. **Trees and Shrubs**, **Roses**, **Lawns** etc.

www.dermotoneill.com/your_garden/qanda.asp This site has an excellent questions and answers section. It is divided into categories – click on the category that you are interested in. For a monthly checklist of things to do in the garden click on www.dermotoneill.com/your_garden/index.asp

www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/archive.shtml Advice on all aspects of gardening **Propagation**, **Plant**, **Watering** and **Pruning**.

www.gardenadvice.co.uk/index.html Click on **How To** at the top of screen for advice.

www.rhs.org.uk/advice/index.asp Scroll down under **Help & advice**. Click on the **easy-to-use problem solver**. It is very useful for beginners as it is divided into sections on pests, weeds, etc. Click on the topic that you wish to know more about.

To find an unusual plant or a specialist nursery see RHS plant finder on www.rhs.org.uk/plants/index.asp as it includes some Irish nurseries.

Online gardening clubs

An online gardening club is an interactive site where you can share ideas and information. See www.garden.ie/Pages/signup/signup.html

To access club pages you have to register. This is quick and easy. You need an email address. Once registered you can access additional services, e.g. **questions and answers**, **discussion groups**, **information about gardening** and **clubs and societies**.

www.letsgogardening.co.uk/information/clubs.htm links to lots of gardening clubs and societies in the UK.

Gardening for produce

Eating fruit or vegetables which you have grown yourself can be very rewarding.

Planning

You need to decide about issues such as the site and the type of soil, does the soil need improving with organic matter and whether to plant seeds or to buy seedlings.

For information about growing vegetables, soft fruit or tree fruit
www.garden.ie/Pages/gardening-know-how/index.html
Click on the links **Vegetable Growing**, **Soft Fruit** or **Tree Fruit**.

www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/htbg/module7/
This website has a section on **The Productive Garden**. It is very well laid out in modular form with a step by step guide to growing fruit and vegetables.

Click on the first link on the left hand side of page to get help to set up your plot

For more information on planning and growing fruit and vegetables, see
www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/basics/techniques/growfruitandveg_index.shtml

Buying plants or seeds for produce

Vegetable plants/seeds

www.victoriana.ws/cat.asp?CID=3 To buy vegetable plants or seeds online.

Ordering is very easy on this website, scroll down the list of vegetables and **click on the picture** of the one you wish to order.

Vegetable seeds

To buy seeds see http://seeds.thompson-morgan.com/uk/en/list/all-vegetables

Fruit trees, herb plants

See www.futureforests.net for **fruit trees** and **herb** plants. Items are available by mail order only. Click on **Fruit and herbs** under the **Container** lists heading.

Mushrooms, pears, apples, cherries see www.bakker.co.uk
Click on **Fruit & Vegetables** at the centre top of the screen.

Seeds for flowers, vegetables, herbs or fruit www.fothergills.co.uk/

Click on link **Flowers**, **Vegetables**, **Herbs** or **Fruit** from the menu across the top of the screen.

Organic seeds

For organic seeds see www.theorganiccentre.ie
Click on **Organic Seed Catalogue** to view seed lists. Mail order only.

For help and advice

On vegetable and herb gardens see www.gardeningpatch.com
Click on the links **Vegetable Gardening** and **Herb Gardening**. This website also features **Gardening Basics** like improving your soil, watering your plants and dealing with slugs.

For specific help and advice on fruit and vegetable gardens
http://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/problems_fruitveg.asp

For advice on herbs see www.herbalgardens.com/contents.html

Bulletin boards/Forums

Bulletin boards and forums are interactive sites for exchanging ideas, tips and information on gardening via the Internet.

Most require registration before adding or replying to a message. Click on **Frequently Asked Questions** (FAQ's) or **help** to check on registering. You will need an email address to register. Some examples of bulletin boards are provided below:

www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/advice Scroll down the screen and click on **gardening message boards**.

www.gardenstew.com A gardening forum where you can exchange advice and ideas. Click on **in the garden** and then select the topic of interest.
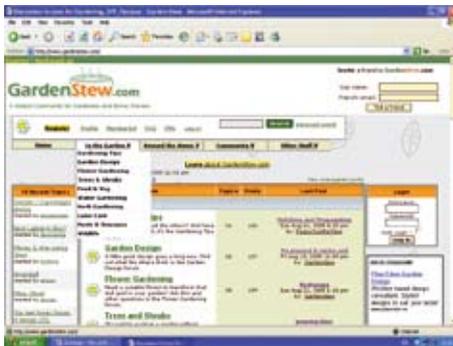
www.kitchengarden.co.uk A kitchen garden forum

RHS bulletin board www.rhs.org.uk/advice/problems_archive.asp
Scroll down this page and click on **bulletin board**.

Plant finder

Seeking information on a specific plant for a specific place in the garden? e.g. an evergreen plant for a shady spot in the garden?

Use **plant finder** www.bbc.co.uk/gardening/plants/plant_finder/index.shtml which brings you to the search page. Enter the details of the type of plant you want in each search field. The more specific your request, the shorter the result list will be. However, It is best not to restrict your search too much by making a selection in each field as you may not get any results. A more specific choice can be made from the list displayed after the initial search.

Links to other websites of interest

www.igps.ie Irish Garden Plant Society

www.rhsi.ie Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland

www.arboretum.ie Irish garden centre of the year 2004

www.modelcountypaving.com garden and paving centre

www.irishseedsavers.ie promoting Irish bio-diversity

www.rockworld.ie natural rock features for your garden

www.wildflowers.ie information and wildflower seeds

www.peonypassions.com Irish-based mail order nursery specializes in selling peonies

www.gardenadvice.co.uk/howto/water/index.html advice on water gardening

www.gardenguides.com/TipsandTechniques/container.htm advice on container gardening

www.johnstowngardencentre.ie/product.htm sells seeds and gardening books online

www.bakker-irl.com/ online ordering and good gardening advice links

www.woodiesdiy.com/ shop online for gardening items – also has gardening tips

www.strictly-plants.co.uk advice on alpines, herbs and wildflowers

www.rhododendrons.com for advice and to buy rhododendrons

www.pesticides.gov.uk/garden_home.asp advice about pesticides in the garden

www.carryongardening.org.uk – website which encourages less able people to keep gardening

www.herbsociety.org.uk society for increasing the understanding, use and appreciation of herbs and their benefits to health

www.wigglywigglers.co.uk – natural gardening

www.recklessgardener.co.uk an online gardening magazine

www.learningireland.ie has links to day and evening courses all over Ireland

www.thegoodwebguide.co.uk link to gardening pages of this online guide to the best websites on the internet.

Gardens to visit

In Ireland

www.dillongarden.com Helen Dillon's award winning garden

www.powerscourt.ie/ Powerscourt garden, Co Wicklow

www.fotahouse.com/ Fota House and gardens, Cork

www.visitdublin.com/gardens gardens to visit in Dublin including the National Botanical gardens

www.heritageireland.ie Ireland's heritage gardens

www.ireland.ie/things_2_do_results.asp?querystring_keyword=gardens a list of over 120 gardens around Ireland

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-global/w-localtoyou.htm# link to National Trust Northern Ireland

Outside Ireland

www.rhs.org.uk/chelsea/2006/index.asp Chelsea Flower Show

www.rhs.org.uk/hamptoncourt/2006/index.asp Hampton Court Flower Show

www.rbgkew.org.uk Kew Gardens

www.chateauversailles.fr/en/130_The_Parc.php Versailles Palace and gardens

www.keukenhof.nl/ Dutch garden that features world famous tulips displays

Glossary

Bulletin Board: An interactive section found in some websites that permits individuals to post online comments on a topic. Each bulletin board is usually based on a particular theme or topic (e.g. discussion group on a particular author, news story, sport).

Drop-down menu: A list of choices that appears when you click on a word or hold your pointer over the word.

Email: Email or electronic mail is a service that sends messages across the Internet from one human user to another. Like a letter, email is person-to-person and it stores messages until they are read.

FAQ's: **(Frequently Asked Questions)**
A FAQ is a list of questions and their answers, which are commonly asked. These are published on the website of a product or service, so that the same question is not asked of the supplier, over and over again. A good example of a FAQ, which focuses on web security, is at http://www.w3org./Security/Faq/www-security-faq.html

Forum: A space where individuals may exchange views online.

Homepage: The main or introductory page of a website.

Internet: A large collection of computers, connected together to allow them to share information with one another.

Interactive Site: A site where you can post comments, remarks, questions, and receive replies from other users.

Link: A link, or hyperlink, is a part of a web page that, if clicked with a mouse, opens a different web page. Links are usually shown in blue and underlined on a webpage.

Online: A word used as shorthand for 'on the Internet' or 'connected to the Internet'

Register: To register means to create an identity online. For many services, it is important that the website knows your name, address, phone number, etc. For example, if buying a book in an online bookshop, you need to provide this information. The online bookshop then records your details in a database of customers, which it later uses to post out the book to you. Registration is usually completed by filling in an online form, with fields for name, address and other information.

Website: A website is a collection of web pages which displays information on a particular topic. Common types of websites include company websites (information about the company), online shops (where you buy goods and services and pay by credit card) and personal websites (where individuals share their interests). A website may consist of just one page of information, but will usually contain several pages, all linked together. All the pages in a website usually share the same 'domain' name. For example, all the pages in the large online shop Amazon have an address (URL) that starts with 'www.amazon.com'.