

Domoney's  
**AtoZ**  
of plants



## Junipers can cause division

LAST time in my A-Z of plants we looked at Ilex. Today we turn to J – juniper.

**J** Common juniper, *juniperus communis*, is a slow-growing evergreen with aromatic pointed leaves in an array of beautiful grey-green colours and a range of shapes and sizes.

A member of the cypress family, it will grow in almost any well-drained soil and needs little if any pruning, making it ultra low-maintenance.

It is especially useful in hot, sunny sites where other plants may wither so it's common in Mediterranean countries.

Depending on the variety, it can be bushy or columnar, cover ground or grow up to 25 feet. All types carry small green fruits that ripen to black. Squash one under your thumb and you'll enjoy an instant scent of pine.

A stately row of junipers is perfect for dividing a garden, marking a boundary or simply adding a classy feature.

# Gardening

with David Domoney



## Growing



### South

**BEDFORD ROAD, St Albans**

**Applicant: David Glanville**

DAVID and his neighbours live in an area of Victorian terraces that have small or no front gardens.

A few years ago major roadworks turned the area into a building site. Frustrated, David created a community group to improve their area and began encouraging gardening among the residents.



Their local garden centre offered

its support too. Now almost every resident on four streets joins in, growing container gardens and hanging baskets and helping each other out.

The demographic is quite young with some older residents and they all come together for "meet the neighbours" events and pub drinks.

David said: "It's a great example how it started with one or two properties and spread across houses and even streets, everyone having a go, from a simple hanging basket to a full front garden."

### Wales and Northern Ireland

**WILDFLOWER ALLEY**

**Applicant: Brid Ruddy**

RESIDENTS in Belfast have turned an alley leading to their streets into a wildflower haven – with murals, painted gates and fences, relaxed seating, bird feeders and hopscotch.

They removed the concrete floor to reveal the original cobblestones and now have a rain-permeable surface. They used recycled materials and were given planters and compost by the council as well as plants from community gardens.

It's the first community-led regeneration project in an area which has been in decline for the past 20 years. Brid said: "We hope that

Wildflower Alley will sow the seeds for the social and economic regeneration so badly needed in this area."

David said: "A great example of community spirit transforming a dull lifeless area into a beautiful haven full of foliage and flower."



### Midlands

**MALT MILL LANE**

**Applicant: Maggie Payne**

THE buildings in this historical area of Alcester, Warwickshire, were renovated some years ago.

The residents decided to start growing plants outside the

properties to improve the look of the area. This quickly turned into a community project with the whole street getting involved.

The market town dating from Roman times receives a lot of visits from tourists and they love to wander down the lane.

The neighbours raise funds to pay for the upkeep of the area and to ensure it always looks tip top. Maggie said: "The street is much nicer now – it's a great place to live."

David said: "A picture postcard street with planted containers that fill areas where there are no gardens, lining the streets with beautiful displays."



### North

**KENSINGTON STREET**

**Applicant: Marie Reeves**

HOUSES on Kensington Street in Nelson, Lancs, originally had no front gardens.

There used to be a wood store on the land but it was burned down and the space was left derelict.

Over the years, residents have adopted the unused land to turn it into gardens.

Eventually, they fenced it off to create front gardens, and some have claimed possession through the land registry.

The residents had to leave a walkway between the front gardens and the houses so people could get to their front doors. They have also cleared another abandoned area that was overgrown

Ireland, the South, and the Midlands and East Anglia each landing £500 in vouchers and a chance to win the £10,000 Best Street top prize. David said: "It's so inspiring to see people create beautiful neighbourhoods with their gardens, which are also pulling their families together and providing a happy and supportive community."



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with weeds. Everyone bought and donated plants and they made a central feature out of a recycled pallet from a local homeware store.

David said: "This is an inspiring example of how a community can pull together and gain their own front gardens from derelict abandoned space."

## How to... Keep your lawn happy this autumn

AUTUMN is an important time for your lawn. There's a good chance the hot summer has stressed your lawn, even if it's not yellowed.

### Strengthen for winter

A moist autumn gives lawns time to rejuvenate before winter and get itself back into shape for next spring. Use the last months of the growing season to strengthen and prepare the lawn for winter. The effort put in will improve the quality and health of your grass into

the following spring and beyond.

### A cut above

With shorter days and temperatures falling, the rate grass grows will slow, meaning less mowing. Raise the height of cut as winter approaches and pick up fallen leaves to stop the grass rotting. On dry days, a stiff brush is perfect.

### Beat disease with feed

An autumn feed will give your lawn essential nutrients to strengthen

itself for winter. Ask your local garden centre staff for advice and look for a product that encourages root growth. Damp conditions can lead to diseases. Applying lawn food in early autumn helps combat these by strengthening the plants.

### Apply the rakes

Use a nice springy rake to scarify the lawn. This will reduce the build-up of dead grass matter, roots and

**Tip**  
GIVE your shed a good soaking with the hosepipe so you can see if there are any leaks and fix them before the winter weather hits.

moss which can increase stress to the grass. Scarification can be done with a spring-tine rake by vigorously pulling it through the grass.

If you've got a big patch, electric or petrol scarifiers are available for hire from local garden centres or DIY stores.

Use a fork or spiking machine to aerate compacted areas of the lawn. Finally, don't panic if your lawn attracts worm casts. Casts are full of nutrients. Leave them to dry and then sweep them away with a stiff brush.

## Q&A

Your gardening questions answered. Send your questions to [gardening@people.co.uk](mailto:gardening@people.co.uk)

**Q** I'VE painted my fence panels and they look great but the grey concrete posts are an eyesore. Can you suggest anything to improve the look please?  
N Beacher, Winchester, Hants.

**A** IT amazes me more people don't do something about those boring fence posts because there's an easy solution. A lick of ordinary masonry paint will work wonders. It's the same with any concrete in the garden. Either choose paint that matches the panels, or go wild with the colour.





# up well



1st

**POT LOADS OF FUN**  
Ballycraigypupils getting hands-on experience

## This year's school winners

### BALLYCRAIGY SCHOOL Applicant: Jocelyn Brown

TEN years ago the garden at Ballycraig Primary School in Antrim, Northern Ireland, was just tarmac and



grass. Now it is a formally designed plot with raised beds, fruit bushes, a greenhouse and a polytunnel.

The plot is also a lot of fun with an outdoor gym, a woodland trail, play areas, a pond and even a hen house.

Staff, parents and grandparents come to help, as well as the youth club, mother and toddler groups and residents of the local estate.

A community gardening group also use the area and have made furniture from recycled pallets.

They have registered for the Eco Schools project and have recently sown a wildflower meadow.

Jocelyn said: "Our influence has spread so significantly that pupils and their families now have allotments with the local council!"

### DALTON ST MARY'S SCHOOL Applicant: Lynda Preston

WHEN the school gardening club in Dalton-in-Furness, Cumbria, was started two years ago it was just for year three pupils.

But the children loved it so much that it was opened up to kids in years four and five as well.

They transformed an abandoned garden plot and cleared the raised beds and greenhouse. Pupils planted seeds, flowers and veg crops.

In the second year the group doubled in size so they started fundraising by selling plants.

The children entered a gardening competition to build a model World War One garden and came second.

Creating this old look in the grounds inspired the children to invite residents of local sheltered housing to come and talk about their wartime

experiences. The children swapped gardening tips with the elderly residents and regularly drop round to visit them with fresh produce they have grown.

Lynda said: "This year we have a pond and wildflower area. The pupils have loved every minute of it."



2nd

### EAGLEY INFANT SCHOOL Applicant: Lynn Clarkson

PUPILS at Eagley Infants in Bolton have taken over an unused area to create a new and exciting outdoor classroom.

Children grow fruit, vegetables and flowers, sow wildflower seeds and create insect habitats.

Parts of the area are also used for play and learning and they give pupils a chance to design the garden.

The children have hatched ducks and chickens, started a wormery and put in water butts and compost bins.

There is also an Enchanted Wood and Gruffalo's Den, named after the popular children's book, which are used for storytelling. Pupils

have taken their gardening skills to a community garden, a local playgroup and have even helped some elderly neighbours with their plots.

The school recently held an outdoor themed week involving children, parents and governors.

They built pollinator walks, textured paths, willow sculptures and art from recycled materials.



3rd

## Scotland

### ST MICHAEL'S DRIVE

**Applicant: Bobby Houston**  
NEIGHBOURS on St Michael's Drive in Cupar, Fife, have large front gardens that border the whole street. They were inspired to spruce up the road by one resident's widely-admired topiary hedge.

They began taking pride in how their street looked and started doing up their front gardens, which often led to chats over hedges and walls.

The topiary garden has expanded and now includes a mock-up of the Eiffel Tower, right, a church, teddy bears and the Forth Bridge.

The other gardens also feature trees and evergreens and flowering plants to create a truly striking display. They all love their perfect green lawns.

David said: "These front gardens had so much character and personality from their owners that is sure to put a smile on the faces of passers-by, a beautiful display."



## Gadget

A LEAF blower can save you hours of back-breaking raking if you have a sizeable lawn or driveway.

This Bosch model is lightweight, and battery-operated so there's no cord to trip over and it's easy to handle even in smaller spaces.

You may think a leaf blower is a luxury, but you'll soon change your mind when you start using one.

I found the one pictured being sold for £99.98 from [www.diy.com](http://www.diy.com) which is the website of B&Q.



## Jobs for the week

### 1. Ward off bugs

Keep an eye out for insects that might be attacking your plants. They're especially hungry right now. A general insecticide will soon sort them out.

### 2. Make your beds

Autumn bedding plants are ready to go into the ground. Chrysanthemum, winter flowering pansies and

cyclamen should be showing a lot of colour.

### 3. Fruitful work

Fruit bushes should be given a good feed. Raspberries, blackcurrants and gooseberries are finishing bearing fruit, so help them get a head start on next year.

