

Episode 204 show notes and advice

Episode description

For those who garden, whether on a windowsill or on a grander scale, it soon becomes a source of inspiration, passion and peace. A way to ground and find solace and, increasingly, a test of resilience and adaptability too.

In a reversal of the usual 'grow, cook, eat, arrange' format, journalist and broadcaster Alex Clark turns guest question master to steer the conversation on Sarah's journey into horticulture, what they both get from gardening, and the sensory delights that growing, plants and wildlife can bring into our lives.

In this episode, discover:

- How Alex came to gardening as a newfound passion
- Incredible tips for newcomers from Sarah's 30+ years' of growing experience at Perch Hill
- Sarah's original career path, and how she found the love of flowers that she now shares with us all
- Why pot gardening is 'the great equaliser' and a fantastic way for everyone to garden wherever they are

Alex and Sarah's backgrounds (2:40)

Behind every great garden is a gardener, and the lifelong journey and experiences that have led them there.

While Alex's main work is in the literary field, and latterly as a podcaster, she's recently been inspired to start growing, building a garden of her own in Ireland. Meanwhile, we're reminded of Sarah's own medical background as a doctor, and given greater insight into how she came to the world of horticulture in her mid-20s.

How the garden was established at Perch Hill (14:20)

The Perch Hill that we know and love today was once an art gallery, and before that, a typical Sussex High Weald tenant farm. Sarah recalls the moment that she and her husband

Adam took it on, starting with a trial patch for cut flowers and adding extra sections bit by bit, slowly evolving it into the garden we recognise today.

The 'give-it-a-go' attitude, and what Sarah has planned for this coming year (27:00)

Newcomers to gardening might be tempted to get hung up on the science, but Sarah shares a liberating idea that we should just get stuck in and learn by doing. You can't do too much damage, but you'll learn so much in return.

As for what Sarah is giving a go in 2025, she and the team are thinking particularly about wet and dry, so considering drainage on their heavy clay soil and experimenting with drier gravel environments to test drought tolerant planting. Sarah and team will also plant a mixed orchard which Sarah has been researching for the last few years.

Sarah's love of pots, and the abundance of them at Perch Hill (32:40)

Perch Hill is proud home to around 500 pots, and inspired one of Sarah's most recent books – A Year Full of Pots. One of the reasons there are so many pots at Perch Hill is due the many trials run by Sarah and Head Gardener Josie. Alex agrees that pots are a fabulous way to garden since they allow us to change the look and feel of a space instantly, a sentiment that Sarah seconds.