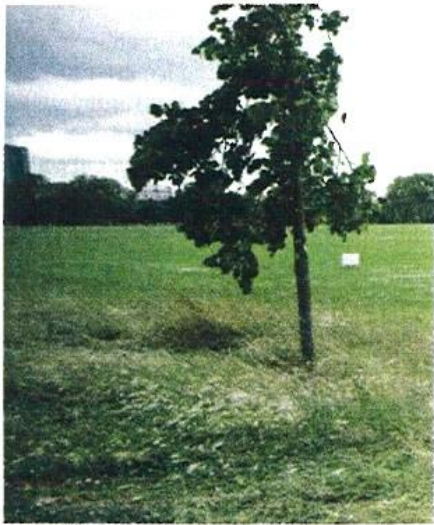


Ken's gardening leave

This week: The lazy gardener



GREG FUNNELL

As the VAT rate is cut and we tighten our belts, there is no better time to adopt a low-maintenance lifestyle. There are a lot of books and articles about low-maintenance gardens which will tempt the gardening averse to take up a spade, and there is one type of garden which, once you've set it up, requires its lawn to be cut just twice a year.

In a wild meadow garden, you cut the lawn in spring and in autumn, and, from my own experience, you can probably get away with cutting the lawn just once annually. My next-door neighbour had a car accident ages ago which meant gardening was out of the question; after years of watching the bindweed

take over and gradually launch forays into my own garden, I offered to sort his patch out.

The tough part was digging over the whole garden to a foot in depth to get the bindweed root and other perennial weeds out. If this is too much like hard work, you could just cover the whole garden with black plastic for a season – which kills everything underneath it – and then lightly dig the soil over and scatter wild meadow seed. This is available from all garden centres and usually includes wildflower seed as well.

Cut it a couple of times as it grows, and in subsequent years each spring and at the end of each autumn. If some of the old weeds come back, just dig them out by hand. In a few years the grass will be so thick it will smother any new weeds.

Your reward will be a waist-high meadow which attracts birds and insects all year round. You never need to use weed killers and, because meadow grass doesn't like rich soil, you never need to spend a penny on fertiliser. Hey presto! A belt-tightening, low-maintenance garden.

Green Queen

Eco sexy

Is there anything in the world less likely to get someone in the mood than a discussion about melting ice caps, dangerous chemicals and energy consumption? At first glance, eco and ethical issues, if not completely at odds with sexy talk, do seem pretty much irrelevant to it.

However, if you're the sort of person who gets worried about the origins of produce you put on your hair and in your mouth, then the stuff you welcome in downstairs is logically even more of an issue. Thank goodness, then, that some amorous eco retailers have considered the

environment when letting nature take its course. Over at cheeky sex boutique Sh! in Hoxton Square (women only), you can pick up Yes lubricant (£5.50, www.sh-womenstore.com) which is free of nasty chemicals and completely organic. If this should, ahem, wet your appetite for more adventurous activities, erotic emporium Coco de Mer (see page 30) is as ethically minded as you would expect from Sam Roddick, the daughter of Anita and founder of the shop. Another



VERONICA DALL'ANTONIA

don't-miss sexy brand for any ecophile's list should be the brilliant Eco-Boudoir (www.eco-boudoir.com). Founded by Jenny White in 2007, it offers luxurious silky smalls made using 100% sustainable methods which support small groups of women in India. The 'Tie Me Up Ties', £35, and 'Seductive Masks', £45, are especially alluring.

If you're in the market for a new adult toy, but the waste materials in the mounting pile you have exhausted troubles you, then aside from perhaps getting out a bit more, you'd do well to visit www.lovehoney.co.uk. It is operating a 'rabbit amnesty'; send in your old rabbit vibrator and it'll sell you a new one for half price. I will also donate £1 to a green charity and recycle the good bits from your old machine... a bit *eugh*, but a good idea if you like to be naughty but nice. *Katie Dailey*