

100
YEARS



Bring 'On the Edge' home to your garden

Easy ideas inspired by Sarah Eberle's
'On the Edge' garden for CPRE at RHS
Chelsea Flower Show 2026

About the garden

The countryside isn't always somewhere distant.

For many of us, it starts at the end of the road - the gap in the hedge, the rough ground where the town stops and the fields begin. These overlooked places, known as edgelands, are where most of us experience nature in everyday life. Yet they are undervalued, under pressure, and too often taken for granted.


Our 'On the Edge' garden at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2026 celebrates the beauty and resilience of these landscapes - and shows what's possible when overlooked places are given the care they deserve.



The good news?


You can bring that same feeling into your own garden. This guide shows you how, in four simple steps, inspired directly by the garden and its designer, Sarah Eberle.





Set on undeveloped land on the edge of a town, cared for by a local community, 'On the Edge' is a garden about resilience and hope. At its heart is a fallen mature tree, carved by chainsaw artist Chris Wood into a guardian figure - Gaia, or Mother Nature - still supporting life. Her willow hair flows to form the top of a dry-stone wall that winds through generous, textural planting. The site was previously used for fly-tipping of garden waste - and those naturalised plants have been embraced rather than cleared, transforming neglect into abundance.

It is a garden that asks you to look differently at the ordinary - and see what's already there.



A sense of abundance, a landscape under repair, the beauty in the ordinary. It's about how it makes you feel - it's almost a homecoming, an embrace, a hug.

Sarah Eberle, garden designer

The ideas you can try at home



You don't need to recreate the garden. You just need to borrow its spirit: go a little wilder, choose materials that feel like they belong, and work with what you already have. As Sarah says, it's not what you have - it's how you use it. Beauty exists in the ordinary.



1 Go wild on your own terms

Use plants you'd find in the countryside - native species - but plant them more boldly than nature does. In the wild, you'd see single specimens scattered through a landscape. In your garden, group them together for drama and abundance. Even a small patch planted this way can feel like a piece of edgeland.

Good plants to start with:



Hawthorn - sculptural shapes, wonderful for wildlife

Common dogwood - glowing stems through autumn and winter



Buttercups - often dismissed as weeds, but brilliant when used with intention



Native ferns - resilient and layered in shaded spots



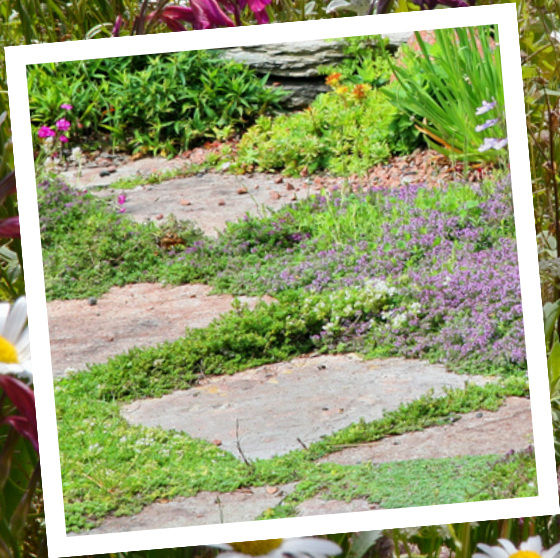
Hornbeam - a deciduous broadleaf tree found in hedgerows



2

Choose materials that feel like they've always been there

Gravel, rough stone, reclaimed timber and boulder paths all bring an immediate sense of place. Let moss and greenery grow in the gaps – that's not neglect, it's texture. Avoid highly polished or uniform surfaces; they pull a garden back towards the urban and ornamental. The 'On the Edge' garden uses dry-stone walling and natural gravels for exactly this reason – materials that suggest the rural-urban fringe where hard meets soft.



DID YOU KNOW -
A single hawthorn
can support over
150 insect
species — bees,
butterflies,
beetles and
moths.

Make a dead hedge

3

A dead hedge is one of the simplest, most characterful things you can add to a garden - and it costs nothing but a little time.

Push pairs of wooden stakes into the ground about 30–50cm apart, then fill the space between them with whatever you have: prunings, fallen branches, hedge cuttings, windfall wood. Keep adding to it over time. Curve it through a border, tuck it under trees, or use it to divide a space. It creates wonderful habitat for birds, insects and small mammals - and visually, it has a presence that no bought fence can match. Coppiced hazel works particularly well for the stakes, and you'll get nuts in autumn too.



4

Work with what you already have

A boulder or tree stump isn't a problem to solve - it's a feature waiting to be noticed. An uneven patch of ground can become a wildlife corner. A gap in the hedge can become a view. Browse second-hand shops for weathered metal or wooden furniture; anything that suggests permanence and belonging will help your garden feel more rooted in place.

Sarah imagined a piece of land on the edge of a town that a local community had begun to care for - where self-seeded plants weren't cleared but celebrated, and where neglect had quietly become abundance. That's the spirit to bring to your own garden: work with what's there, and see it for what it is.



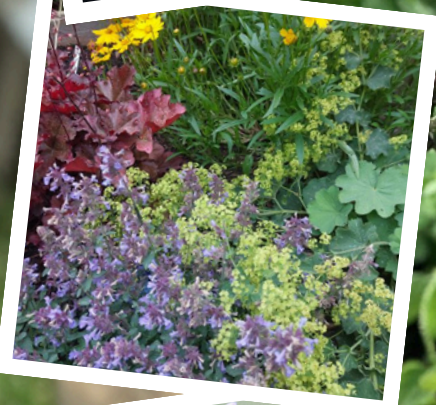
DID YOU KNOW -
Native plants that many dismiss as weeds, like buttercups and cow parsley, are really important for most insects.

Beauty
exists in the
ordinary.



Limited space? No problem.

Even a window box or a few pots can make a difference. Choose native plants over bedding, let a pot go a little wild, or add a small bundle of hollow stems for solitary bees. The edgeland spirit works at any scale.



Your garden is part of something larger

The edgelands that inspired this garden exist all around us - the rough ground at the edge of housing estates, the flood meadow behind the retail park, the scrubby margin between the road and the fields. These places are where 30 million people find their nearest countryside. They support wildlife, help manage flood water, cool overheated streets and give people somewhere to breathe.

But they are under growing pressure - from development, neglect and the gradual erosion of the green space around our towns and cities. Without action, these precious places will slip away.

Every garden that goes a little wilder, every patch that chooses native plants over polished paving, is a small act of connection with these landscapes. And connection is where care begins.





Stand up for the countryside near you
Visit our 'On the Edge' garden page to find out
more about the campaign - and look out for our
On the Edge pledge, launching soon.
cpre.org.uk/rhs-chelsea-2026

About CPRE

CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, has been standing up for England's countryside for 100 years. In our centenary year, we're inviting everyone to Love Your Countryside - to protect what matters, regenerate what's been lost and connect to the places that sustain us all.

cpre.org.uk | [@cpre](https://twitter.com/cpre) | [#LoveYourCountryside](https://hashtage.com/#LoveYourCountryside)