



Vanessa Arbuthnott

# Dog days & daisies

Cath Kidston



Ewa Shephard muses over the perfect outdoor retreat

**T**he long, lazy dog days of summer are upon us, enticing us out of our cocoons into nature's buzzing chirruping domain. Who can resist stretching out on a padded lounger, glass in one hand, enthralling book in other? And why go back indoors to eat when there are so many ways to make the outdoors even more special for dining, formal or informal?

The importance of planning is not to be dismissed:

*Use a parasol or sailcloth to provide you with a sheltered area.*

*Continue the decor (colour or style) from the room which leads to the outside space, choosing accessories and soft furnishings to reflect this provides a harmonious feel to the entire surroundings.*

*Have you space for an alfresco kitchen to complement the dining area? This makes life much easier than traipsing back and forth, and provides more time to spend with loved ones (or your glass of chilled Sancerre!).*

*Don't forget some gorgeously summery background music!*

Many pieces of furniture respond well to a fresh coat of paint, even if unpainted previously. There's such a wonderful array of palettes to choose from: strong turquoise, offset with purple and white; soft sea washed sand yellows, sage greens and duck egg blues; classic dark wood with touches of raspberry pink or cherry red. Contrast or tone with table linen and cushions; these colours will entice you to stay awhile to relax with family or friends.

To make the occasion even more special, why not use fabric bunting to continue the colour to garden areas where soft furnishings are not feasible? There are wonderful varieties available from many sources. My favourite is Zigzag Bunting and their beautiful and fun pure cotton collections.

Be brave, think away the norm: why not drape swathes of affordable muslin to create an Arabian boudoir to keep the late evening chill out of reach? Adorned with lanterns and candles (obviously, safety first) this will provide a magical outside room to enjoy these short summer weeks.

If your trust of the English summer doesn't stretch as far as the garden, all of these ideas will work beautifully in a conservatory too - imagine the swathes of muslin instead of those dreary blinds, and a few perfect shots of colour to bring the floral outdoors in?

However you decide to dress your outside space, please relax and enjoy, and make the most of what promises to be a wonderful summer!

**EWA recommends:**

Vanessa Arbuthnott Fabrics, inspired by rural settings. Tel: 01295 831437 or visit the website [www.vanessarbuthnott.co.uk](http://www.vanessarbuthnott.co.uk)

Zigzag Bunting Ltd. Tel: 01264 720806 [www.zigzagbunting.com](http://www.zigzagbunting.com)

Cath Kidston - instantly recognisable! Tel: 01761 408888 [www.cathkidston.co.uk](http://www.cathkidston.co.uk)

Ewa Shephard, formerly an interior designer for Fired Earth, is a partner in the family business The Shephards Group, artisan craftsmen and specialist tilers, focusing on creative bathroom solutions managed from start to finish. The company works with your own chosen products, or provides a design and/or sourcing service. Please call or email for an informal chat and further details of Ewa's design service. Tel: 07709 986871. Email: [shephards@mac.com](mailto:shephards@mac.com)



Zigzag Bunting

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