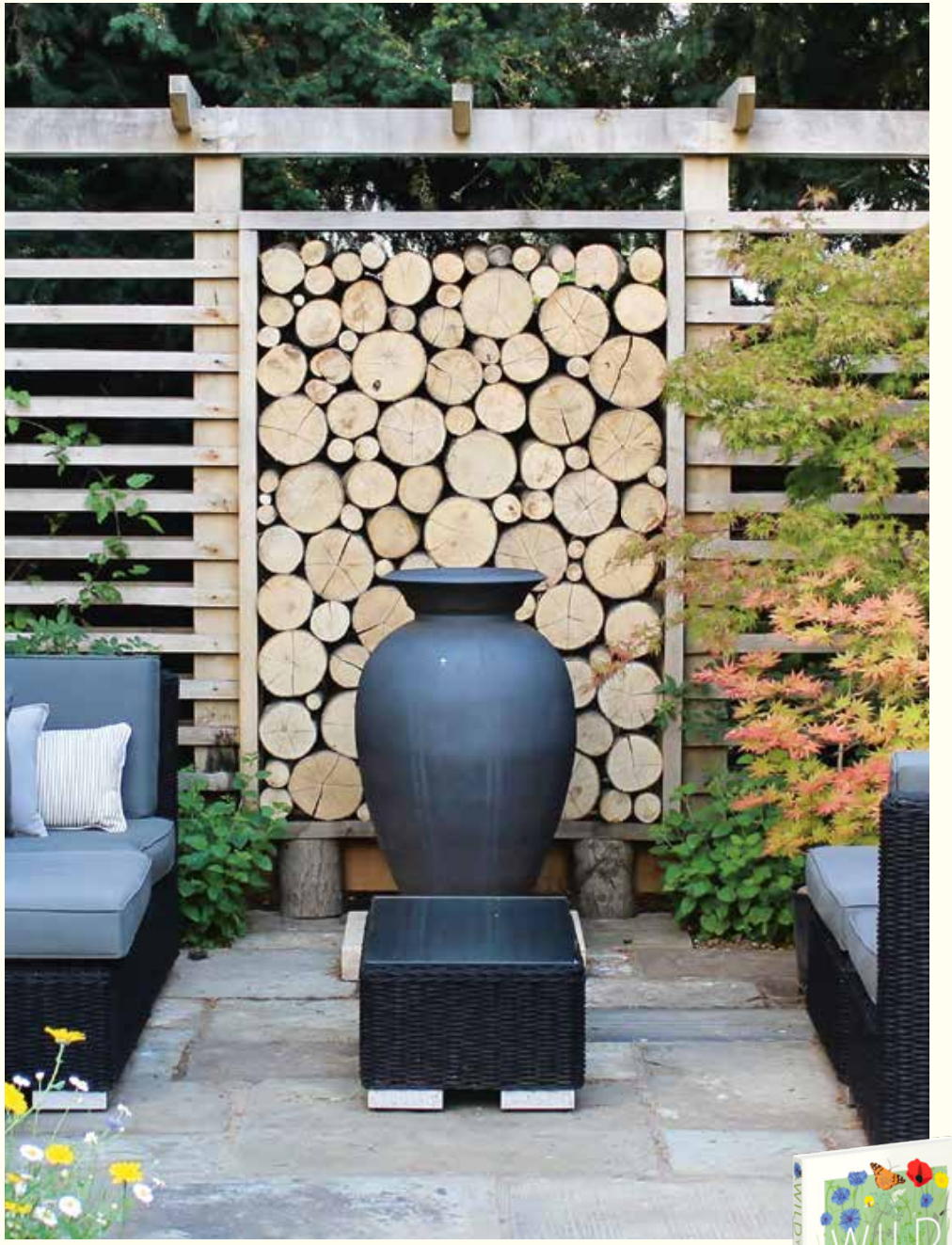
A striking display of logs can also benefit your garden's web of life, starting with the creepy crawlies who love the dead wood.

A LOG WALL

If you are looking to screen an unsightly shed or garage, or perhaps create a secluded "room" for relaxation within your plot, you can do it in a slightly more formal way, while still providing a much-needed home for wildlife, by creating a log wall. As its name suggests, this project involves cutting sections of logs to size and stacking them into a bookcase-type frame, to create a deadwood habitat able to host a myriad of invertebrates. While it is more ambitious than a simple log pile (see pages 154–55) or even a standing-log insect hotel (see page 169), the design shows off the beauty of the logs and proves that a wild garden can still look aesthetically pleasing.

BUILDING THE LOG WALL

You can make this log wall any size you like and in any location. Since the design is encased within a wooden frame, you can choose to site it within



We incorporated a hollow frame in this living trellis screen to hold a large stack of logs, as a formal alternative to a log pile.

an existing fence (see pages 46–51), against a garage wall, or even as a feature near a seating area, as shown in the picture on page 179. This is a heavy-duty project so if you are feeling daunted, you may prefer to call in the professionals, see page 192.

First, you will need to dig holes for two fence posts. These holes should be suffciently deep so that the posts are secure. Insert the posts and, ensuring that they are held firmly upright, concrete them in up to ground level. This stage is essential in order to make a free-standing wall: the posts will effectively act as retaining walls, as they will hold the heavy stack of logs in place. If you site your wall against an existing wall, such as the side of a garage, you may not need to concrete in the posts as you could fix them to the existing structure instead. Check that you own any structure you are attaching your log wall to, or that you have permission.

A well-made log wall can last for a decade or more.

Once the posts are firmly in place, it's time to create the frame. Measure the distance between the two posts, and cut two wooden planks – for the top and bottom – to fit this space. Then, you'll need more planks for the sides of the frame. Old scaffolding timbers, around 20 x 5cm (8 x 2in) are ideal for these frame pieces. Lastly, you'll need two 20cm- (8in-) long logs.

Set the logs upright beneath where the frame will sit. These "legs" will stop the frame bowing under the weight of the stacked logs later on. Place the bottom shelf on top of the upright logs, and secure in place with two right-angled brackets on the underside of each side to offer extra support.

Next, set the side pieces against the posts and secure them in place with heavy-duty exterior screws. (At this stage, if you want to create a back to the log wall for privacy – or to help contain the logs more securely – screw a sheet of exterior-grade plywood, cut to size, to the frame.)

Now, you're ready to add the logs. Unless you have a ready supply of logs to cut up, ask a local tree surgeon for any spare logs or wood that you can cut up. You could also get in touch with your local wildlife trust; if they

undertake coppicing, they may well have some logs going spare. You'll need a random selection of logs, up to about 25cm (10in) in diameter. Enjoy the jigsaw puzzle-like activity of completing the empty space and work all the way up to the top; fill the gaps with smaller logs.

Before long, invertebrates will begin to explore the deadwood habitat of the log wall, including centipedes, millipedes, woodlouse spiders, and even stag beetles. This resident population will, in turn, attract birds looking to feed on them.

LOOKING AFTER A LOG WALL

Because the log wall is sat off the ground, it will last over a decade, although the duration does depend a bit on what species of log you use; softwoods, such as pine, won't last as long as hardwoods, such as oak and ash, which could last up to 20 years.

As the logs in your wall age, they become home to all sorts of invertebrates, including woodlice, many species of beetle, and spiders. Once the older logs have deteriorated, simply replace them with new ones to maintain your log wall over the years.