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These oak-and-steel garden chairs are part of an unusual range of garden furniture, 'Phenome', designed by James Verner. Combining traditional craftsmanship with cutting-edge design, the oak frames have been ebonised, using a process that involves covering the timber with iron filings and then spraying with water, causing the iron to react with the tannins in the oak to stain it black. Each chair is 90cm tall and 54cm wide, and costs £2,875. Also available in the 'Phenome' range is a bench, a dining table and a low table. James Verner Furniture: 01297-678699; www.jamesverner.co.uk.



Various companies now supply vegetable plug plants for aspiring kitchen gardeners who don't have the time to grow everything from seed. New venture Living Leaves goes one step further, offering complete grow-your-own kits, including raised beds. The 120cm-square, wooden beds come in various depths and in three different finishes - Classic, Artisan and Versailles. A plant-protection cloche is also available to fit snugly over any of the beds. Choose to buy plants only, or a complete raised-bed kit, including plants, soil, raised beds and planting plans, which starts at £164 for a 'Mini Kitchen Garden' with one raised bed, and goes up to £1,619 for an eight-bed 'Vegetable Garden' for four (Artisan and Versailles beds cost more). For more details, call 01420-479950, or visit www.livingleaves.co.uk