

PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

Small gardens issue

get maximum
style from a
compact space

Using grasses
for texture and
movement

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RAISED
PLANTERS
FOR EASY
GROWING

WATER WISE

An Australian
family garden
led by sustainability

Abutilon
add a touch of
the exotic

Who wants grey?
Sheffield's blooming city streets

KEY ELEMENTS

What Long, thin, city garden.

Where Northwest London.

Size 50m x 5.5m, with Stefano concentrating his design on the area nearest the house.

Soil Good, moisture retentive yet free-draining loam.

Aspect South-facing.

Special features Atmospheric, 'jungle' planting with a pebble seat and focal arch.

Designed by Stefano Marinaz Landscape Architecture (stefanomarinaz.com).

This long, thin garden feels fabulously lush, with repeat plantings of *Astrantia major* 'Large White' and *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat') lining the serpentine path. Tree ferns and a tall lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) create an effective mid-height layer.

Tales of the unexpected

Lush planting and a meandering path give this city garden by Stefano Marinaz a magical, otherworldly feel

WORDS NATASHA GOODFELLOW PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE

When garden designer Stefano Marinaz first visited this Victorian terraced home in northwest London, he was not expecting its back garden to offer a trip into the unknown. Having gained access through the house, which was being extended and refurbished at the time, he was met with a rather sorry space where intertwining paths demarcated narrow planting beds edged in dying box. So far, so unremarkable. "But the further I went, the more overgrown it became – it was like a forest," he says. "I had to push through brambles and overgrown shrubs and, because the garden is so long and thin, you couldn't see the end. It felt like a journey into the unknown."

It is this feeling – of a secret, magical, compelling space – that Stefano tried to preserve as he transformed the garden for

the clients, whose only request was that it should allow their son to play football. To do this, Stefano used the elongated shape of the plot to his advantage, dividing it to create the necessary lawn while focusing his efforts on the area nearest the house.

Key to creating the atmosphere he wanted is the planting, which is lush and generous, and dissected by a meandering gravel path of fluctuating width. "Having something irregular and organic seemed to fit the space better," says Stefano. Evergreen shrubs such as *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Golf Ball' and *Camellia japonica* 'Alba Plena' mingle with others, including *Hydrangea quercifolia* Snow Queen (= 'Flemygea') and the white-flowering *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, for seasonal interest. Eddying around these are repeat plantings of perennials – *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat'), *Astrantia major* 'Large White' and *Kirengeshoma palmata* among them. ▷

Left

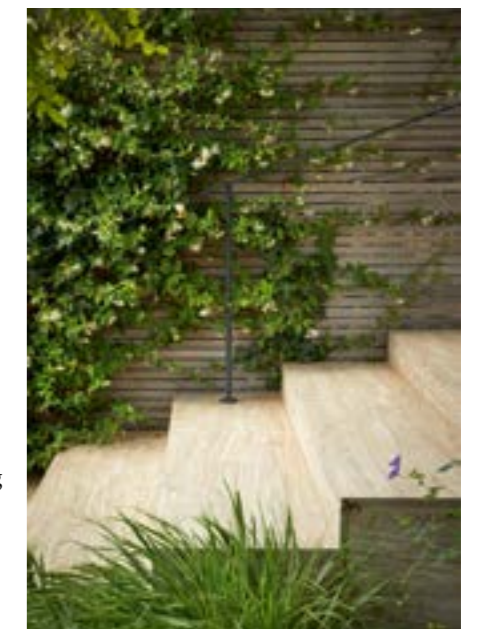
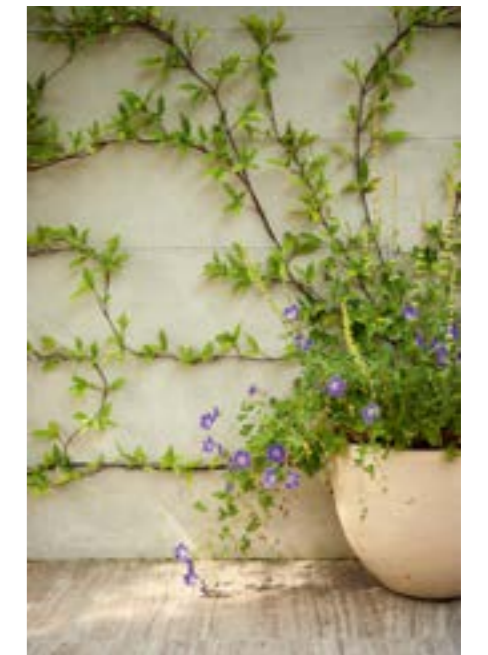
The existing, statuesque false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) was retained and makes a stunning focal point from the kitchen and terrace, also serving to shade the house from the sun. The wood-patterned porcelain tiles complement the wooden flooring within while echoing the sleek design of the interior.

Below

The pots, from Atelier Vierkant, were the starting point for the design, their colour blending perfectly with the terrace tiles and the painted wall, along which *Trachelospermum jasminoides* is trained. In this one, blue *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat') mixes with old inflorescences of *Salvia x sylvestris* 'Serenade', which when in flower provides a contrasting violet.

Bottom

The original boundary fence was retained on one side of the garden. On the other, where it is more visible, it has been replaced with a horizontally slatted design covered in evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, whose scented, white flowers are a delight in mid to late summer.



The crucial sense of immersion and enclosure stems chiefly from the canopy layer, so trees were retained wherever possible

▷ Additional impact comes from six handsome tree ferns, some of them over 3m tall, whose spreading fronds conjure a sense of jungles and lost worlds; a number of tall, glossy-leaved *Fatsia japonica*; and two *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku', whose branches turn bright red in autumn and winter. "They look like little fires burning," says Stefano.

The crucial sense of immersion and enclosure stems chiefly from the canopy layer, so Stefano retained as many trees as he could – three birches, a lilac and, most importantly, a glorious *Robinia pseudoacacia* close to the house. "The leaves are already light green and when the sun shines on them, the whole tree seems to glow with energy," he says.

A rose clambering over an archway to the rear of the space was also preserved, although the arch itself was replaced by a sharp, modern design in powder-coated steel. Coloured green, it acts as a highly effective focal point, drawing the eye along the pathway to the end of this part of the garden and creating a sense of mystery as to where it goes next as it slips, unseen, behind the pair offset yew hedges that screen the lawned area.

Before engaging Stefano, the client had already chosen the pots she wanted to use, a collection of light, sandy-coloured planters from Belgian clay specialist Atelier Vierkant, and it was these – and the design of the new kitchen – that set the tone for the hard landscaping. "I could have used sandstone," says Stefano, "but I felt that these wood-patterned tiles were more contemporary, and part of the same design language as the refurbishment."

The same company also makes smooth, pebble-like seats, one of which now nestles in the borders – revealing and disguising itself as the planting waxes and wanes with the seasons. "To me, it looks like a dinosaur's egg," says Stefano. It does, and one that feels entirely at home in this otherworldly space. □



Seen from above, the wonderful textures of the planting are clear, with, top left, *Mahonia x media*, the shuttlecock eruptions of tree ferns and, just beginning to colour, the serrated leaves of *Acer palmatum* 'Sango-kaku'.



Left
The metal archway acts both as a focal point from the house and as a gateway to the rest of the garden, which includes a large lawn and a garden studio and trampoline. The pebble seat is partly concealed by Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*) and *Kirengeshoma palmata*.

Below left
Astartia major 'Large White', which grows to around 90cm tall, is one of the key perennials in this garden. Stefano chose it for its clump-forming habit, its pure white petals and its stature, meaning it really stands out among the planting.

Below right
There was an existing clump of three hibiscus in the garden before Stefano started work. Feeling that their exotic looks were in keeping with the jungly look of his design, Stefano has relocated the plants to thread the colour through the space.

GARDEN PLAN

- 1 House
- 2 Terrace
- 3 Steps
- 4 Pathway
- 5 Arch
- 6 Further garden



Turn to page 72 for Stefano's design tips