

IN BRIEF

What Small, private, urban garden.
Where London.
Size A long rectangle of roughly 90 square metres (15m x 6m).
Soil London clay, improved by the addition of sandy topsoil.
Climate Temperate and north-facing but partly shaded by surrounding buildings.
Hardiness zone USDA 9.



Room for a view

Stefano Marinaz has created year-round interest in this small urban garden, providing spaces to share with friends and with wildlife

WORDS KATE JACOBS PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE

Three multi-stem *Amelanchier x lamarckii* offer abundant white blossom in spring and help to screen the garden from neighbouring houses. To the left, a row of pleached pear trees, *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer', add further privacy while allowing sunlight to filter through.

People living in towns and cities often dream of their own patch of green, but the typical urban plot can be so much more than just a rectangle of lawn. When the owners of this west London garden approached landscape architect Stefano Marinaz, they had just such a space; some grass, a shed and a couple of shrubs. They've lived in this Edwardian terrace for 14 years and raised two children here but, having recently added a kitchen-dining extension, with floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the garden, they were finding the view less than enthralling. "They reached out to us because of our naturalistic planting and minimalist approach to design, as well as our experience of using art and sculpture in our gardens," says Stefano.

To enhance the views from the house, Stefano brought the planting up to the windows, and positioned the garden's two key spaces – one for cooking and dining; the other for relaxing – away from the house. This layout also encourages the family to come out and engage with the garden, rather than stop on its fringes. Avoiding straight lines, Stefano has designed a gently curving path that meanders through the space, "like a woodland trail", stopping off at the dining and lounge areas.

"Even in a small garden, you can bring a sense of discovery by dividing the space and filtering the views," says Stefano. Three graceful multi-stem *Amelanchier x lamarckii* – one in each of the main borders – do much of the filtering, creating intrigue within the garden and gently screening it from

Below

A meandering path of slate chippings helps to extend the garden's apparent length, leading past a dining area to a lounge space where a garden pot, from Atelier Vierkant, doubles up as a firebowl and a coffee table, with the addition of a custom-made Iroko wood top.

6 key plants

1 *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' Profuse clusters of white flowers in spring and luminous red leaves in autumn. Used here in a pleached form to provide moderate privacy without blocking the light into neighbouring gardens. They are also resistant to air pollution so good for city locations. 12m x 5m. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b[†].

2 *Melica uniflora* f. *albida* Lush green foliage, with delicate-looking white flowers, followed by yellow stamens that sway in the breeze. Stefano has used this perennial grass alongside evergreen grass *Sesleria autumnalis* so that it will creep to fill in any gaps in the planting. 60cm x 60cm. AGM*. RHS H7, USDA 7a-9b.

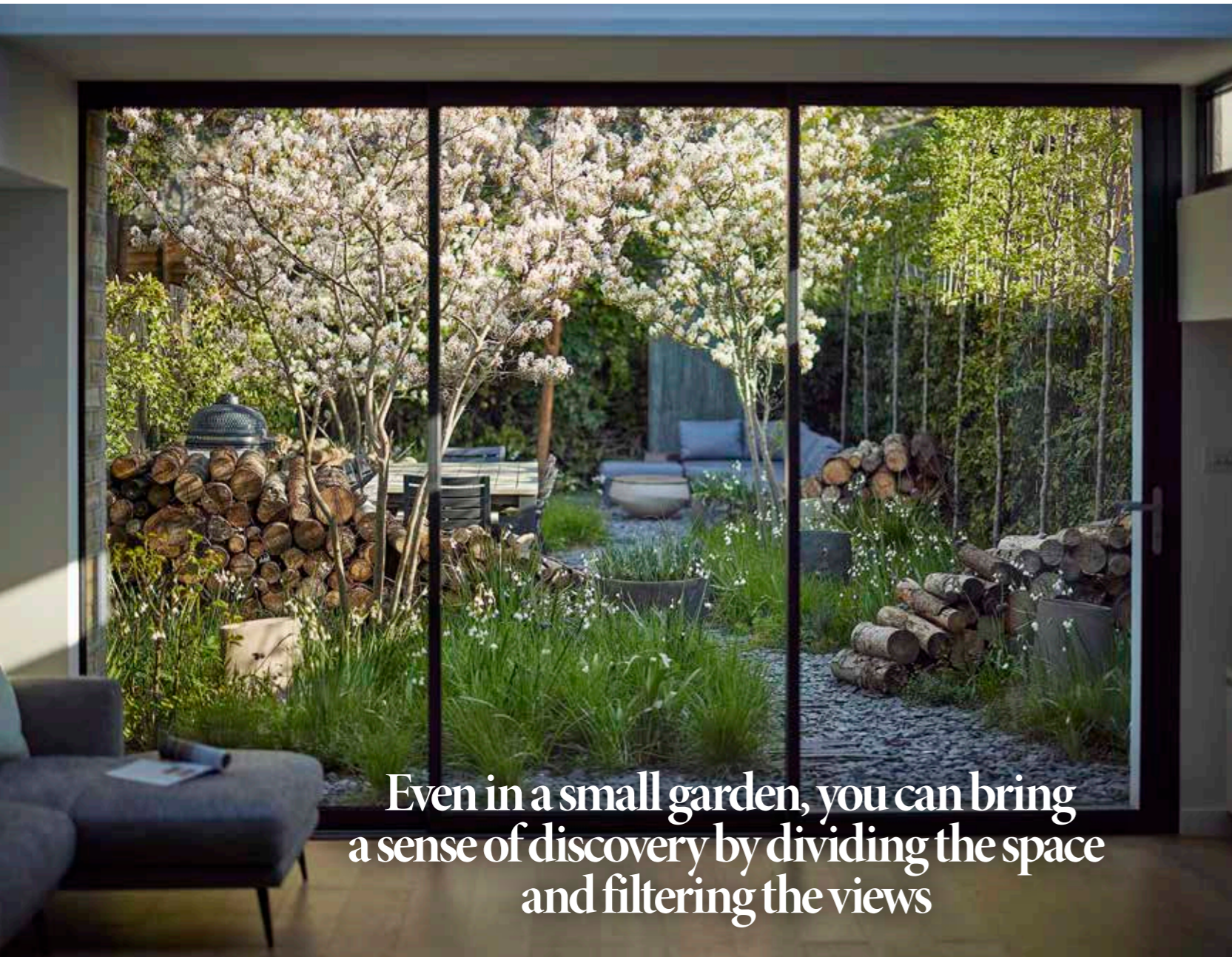
3 *Fritillaria meleagris* Early flowering bulb with intense purple colour and unusual chequered pattern. Works well here with the white flowers of *Leucojum aestivum*. Naturalises easily. 30cm x 5cm. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.

4 *Lunaria annua* 'Chedglow' One of Stefano's favourite biennial plants, he enjoys its heart-shaped, dark-purple foliage, which contrasts here with the surrounding greenery. Following on from the vivid purple flowers, the flat, silvery-white seedpods add winter interest to the garden. 1m x 30cm. RHS H6, USDA 5a-9b.

5 *Epimedium x warleyense* 'Orankekönigin' This compact cultivar produces dainty, orange flowers on wiry stems, with foliage that is tinted red when young. Stefano recommends it for reliability in both full sun and part shade and has seen it tolerate dry conditions too. 45cm x 60cm. RHS H6, USDA 4a-8b.

6 *Leucojum aestivum* 'Gravetye Giant' Snowy-white, bell-shaped flowers, dabbled with vibrant green. Stefano chose this early flowering bulb to naturalise in this small garden as it flowers at the same time as the amelanchiers, and afterwards, its yellowing leaves go unnoticed in among the grasses. 60cm x 10cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.

[†]Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. ^{††}Hardiness ratings given where available.



▷ the neighbouring houses. “They punctuate the space and hold the attention within the garden, with spring blossom, spectacular autumn colour and interesting skeleton forms in winter.”

Picking up on the owners’ budding interest in plants and wildlife, Stefano was inspired to construct a series of sculpture-like log piles, or “log waves” as he calls them. Carefully shaped to create softly curving forms that echo the fluid lines of the path, they bring structure, rhythm and texture to the garden while offering a vital habitat to wildlife, including beetles and solitary bees. “Through their slow ageing process, the log waves will continue to provide something new to observe,” says Stefano. “I like to include dynamic elements in my projects that will change over time.”

Texture is emphasised throughout the garden. Various pots, all from Belgian pottery Atelier Vierkant, feature rough, rugged surfaces, while the vertical water feature, which draws the eye across the garden, has a Brutalist bronze finish, reminiscent of stratified rock.

As the log waves demonstrate, Stefano generally favours a light touch when it comes to hard landscaping. “I always think that for small, urban gardens, less is more; then you can go a bit wild with the planting,” he says. Here he has used free-draining slate chippings to create naturalistic-looking paths that help to soften the garden. They’re reined in by neat steel edges, and used alongside solid slabs of slate in differing sizes that have been set into the path, bringing textural interest while keeping the material palette restrained. While the path is lined with a weed membrane to reduce

maintenance, some pockets were left clear on its borders, to encourage self-seeders such as *Lunaria annua* ‘Chedglow’, *Nigella damascena* and *Valeriana officinalis* to make themselves at home.

Through a backdrop of evergreen grass *Sesleria autumnalis*, Stefano has woven a surprisingly wide variety of species bulbs and perennials, chosen for the colour and texture of their foliage as much as for their flowers. *Fritillaria meleagris* and *Leucojum aestivum* ‘Gravetye Giant’, in spring, are followed by *Baptisia* ‘Dutch Chocolate’, *Eryngium planum* ‘Blue Hobbit’, *Salvia x sylvestris* ‘Dear Anja’ and *Echinacea pallida*, with its gently drooping pale-pink petals. “Gardens are not static things. We wanted to celebrate the changing seasons and that’s particularly important in urban settings where we need a connection to nature.” A row of pleached *Pyrus calleryana* ‘Chanticleer’ encloses the garden on one side, while the fences have been painted black and planted with climbers, including evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides*, enabling the boundaries to soften and recede.

The garden is now a source of year-round delight for its owners, whether they’re pausing to observe the rich and diverse wildlife habitat that Stefano has created here, spending time relaxing with friends, or simply treasuring each fleeting seasonal detail. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Stefano’s work at stefanomarinaz.com

Below

In the evening, lighting adds a new dimension to the garden. Stefano’s versatile scheme, using Hunza Lighting, puts the boundaries, beds, trees and water feature on different circuits, so that the whole garden can be illuminated or the focus thrown on to just one striking feature.

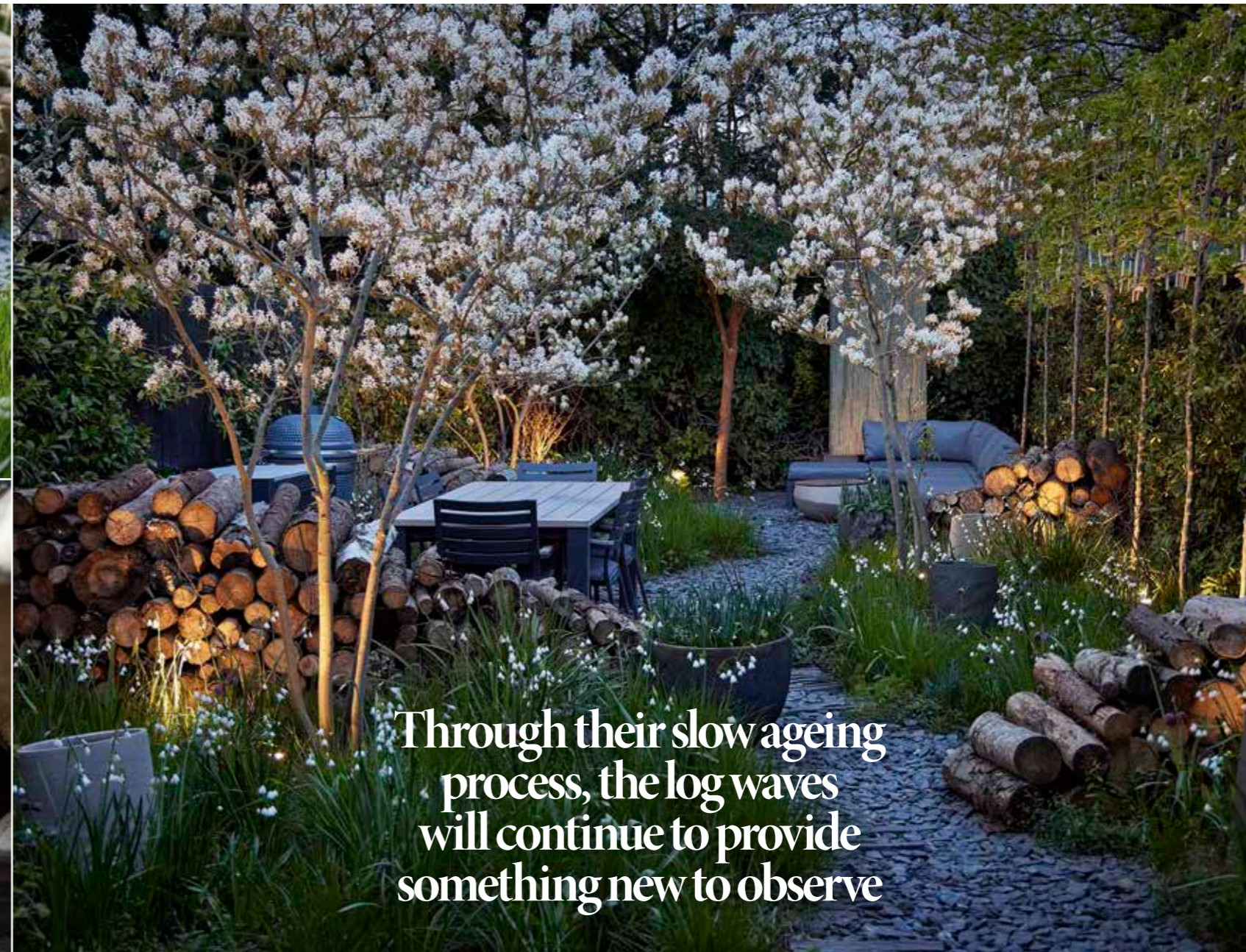
Design details

1 The intense purple-grey of the slate chippings, from CED Stone, creates a pleasing foil for Stefano’s lush, green planting. Stefano has interspersed the chippings with slabs of the same material that he has laid vertically to create visual interest in a restrained way.

2 Stefano chose the structural pots, which all come from Belgian supplier Atelier Vierkant, for their surface patina, which continues the textural theme of the garden. In addition to two large pots, planted to echo the scheme around them, Stefano has opted to leave six pinch-necked pots empty so that they take on a striking, sculptural quality.

4 To create the striking, vertical water feature, Stefano customised a *Dolomite* art piece by Officina Coppola. This imposing feature creates a year-round focal point, aligning with the path at the entrance to the garden. Its position in the lounge area helps to mask the noise of a busy road behind the garden, while its riven bronze finish has a patina that will become richer over time.

3 Supported by an unseen metal stand, the log piles are carefully stacked for sturdiness. Each ‘log wave’ is a curving mass that echoes the lines of the meandering path, adding both structure and year-round interest. Several of the logs have drilled holes (of between 2mm and 9mm) to provide a habitat for insects, including solitary bees. The logs will need to be replenished every eight to 12 years.



Through their slow ageing process, the log waves will continue to provide something new to observe