

GARDEN PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR

# GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

## Sky-high planting

A roof garden with a view  
by Tom Stuart-Smith Studio

## Flower power

Jo Thompson's colourful  
summer pot displays

## Top July plants

Seasonal highlights and  
new lavenders to grow

## Dreamy designs

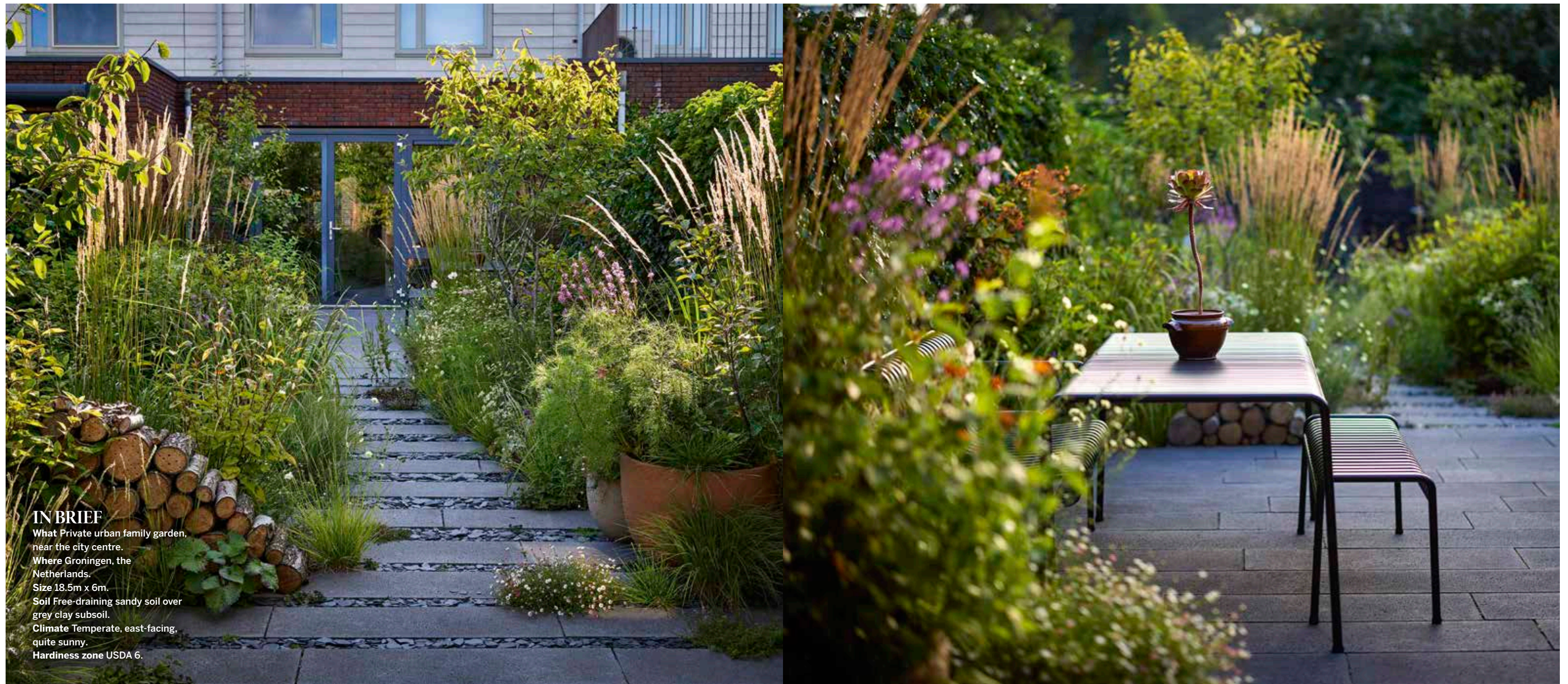
Small family, cool  
coastal and large  
country gardens

## *EVER AFTER*

Expert picks of the best  
blooms for drying





**IN BRIEF**

**What** Private urban family garden, near the city centre.

**Where** Groningen, the Netherlands.

**Size** 18.5m x 6m.

**Soil** Free-draining sandy soil over grey clay subsoil.

**Climate** Temperate, east-facing, quite sunny.

**Hardiness zone** USDA 6.

# New lease of life

Stefano Marinaz's design for this small city garden has the lush planting his clients yearned for and practical touches to make their lives easier

WORDS PAULA McWATERS PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE

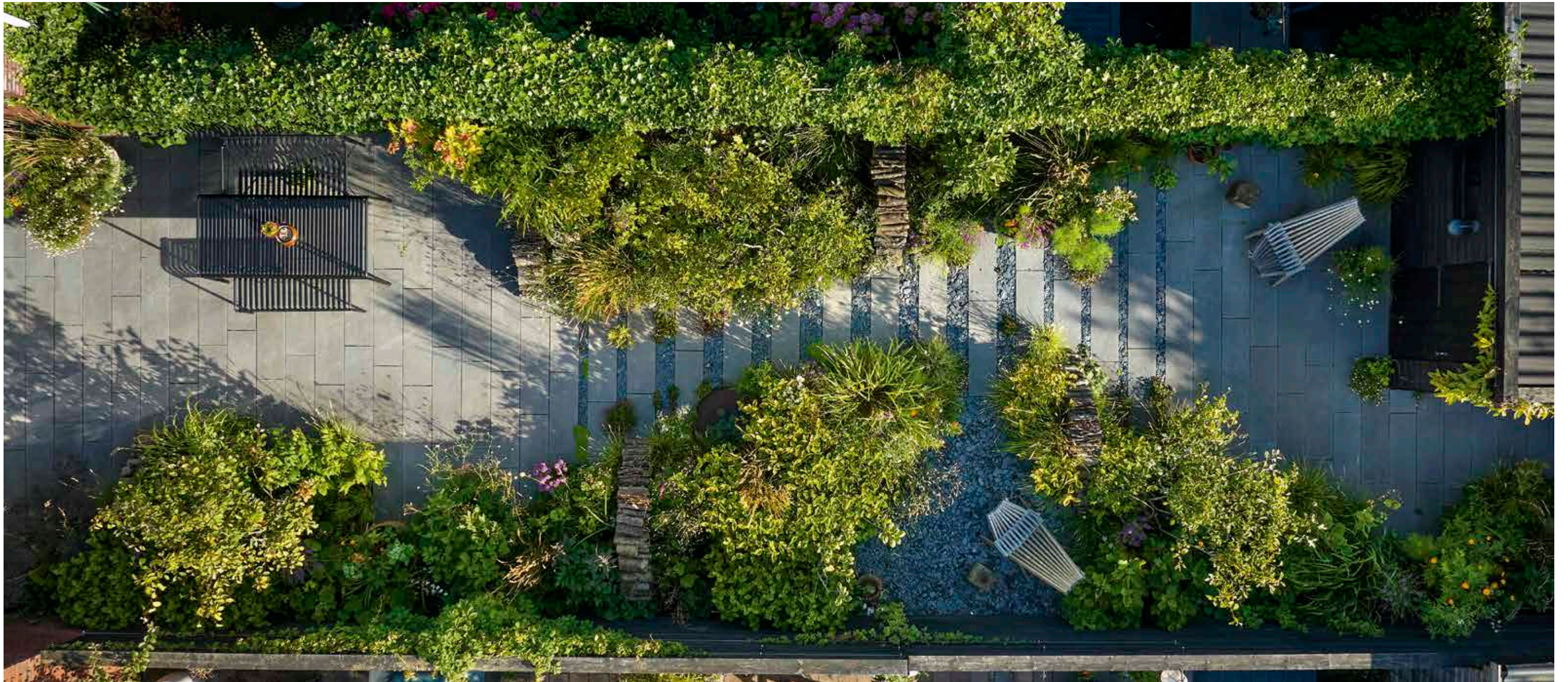
**T**he brief was clear for landscape architect Stefano Marinaz when he took on this urban garden in the city of Groningen in the northern Netherlands. Owners Marianne and Jason Fry, and their eight-year-old daughter Lizzy, were looking out on to a dull, fully paved yard with just two small planting areas and nowhere enticing for Lizzy to play. As well as a place to sit and eat – an extension of their living room – Marianne longed for lush planting. She was looking for a drastic reduction in the amount of paving plus an interesting view to admire from the full-length glass doors at the back of the house. On the practical side, the family need clear space to get their bicycles in and out of the shed each day and wheel them through the back gate, and they also wanted some shade, as the fence-to-fence paving made the garden very hot in summer.

Stefano drew up a plan that has changed not only the garden but, to a great extent, the clients' lives, as he has turned the space into a highly functional green oasis that brings them pleasure and daily interest and ▷

**Above left** The family wanted to look out on to interesting planting year-round, so Stefano has punctuated the space with three multi-stemmed *Amelanchier x lamarckii* trees to add height, plus tall *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' grasses that shimmer and catch the light in the closely planted borders. Neat log piles are an inexpensive way to add sculptural interest and also provide habitat, and have become a bit of a signature element for Stefano.

**Above right** By laying a terrace directly outside the back door, Stefano has given the family an extension of their living room. Meals are frequently enjoyed at the Hay Palissade powder-coated steel table. Planting has been brought up close to the house to give a feeling of being enveloped. Airy plants include *Geum* Coral Tempest (= 'Macgeu004') and *Erigeron karvinskianus*.





**Above** Stefano has divided the garden into three. Closest to the house is the dining terrace, while the planting in the central part wraps around a play space for eight-year-old Lizzy, and the back of the garden gives the family a quiet spot to sit in the afternoon sun as well as space to bring their bicycles through. Several sets of log piles repeat down the garden, giving a harmonious look to the design, while slate chippings intersperse the plank paving of the path, repeated in Lizzy's play area.

▷ engagement. He has divided it roughly in three. Close to the house is a generous seating area for a table and benches for outdoor eating, where the family can linger over breakfast in the morning light. The centre of the garden has been given over largely to naturalistic planting, incorporating a sheltered space within it where Lizzy and her friends can play. At the far end, in the sunniest part, is a tranquil seating area plus room to manoeuvre bikes.

Two fences have been painted black to help them recede while the third is clothed with ivy, providing a welcome habitat for birds and insects.

A terrace of dark-grey concrete paving from Schellevis gives way to a winding path of concrete planks interspersed with bands of slate chippings, which have the advantage of being permeable. "The path winds diagonally across the space and the bands vary in width – design details that help to bring a sense of movement and dynamism. By not making it all symmetrical you give the eye more to explore," explains Stefano.

The generous planting beds have made a dramatic difference. "Now, wherever you are in the garden, you're surrounded by plants, and ▷

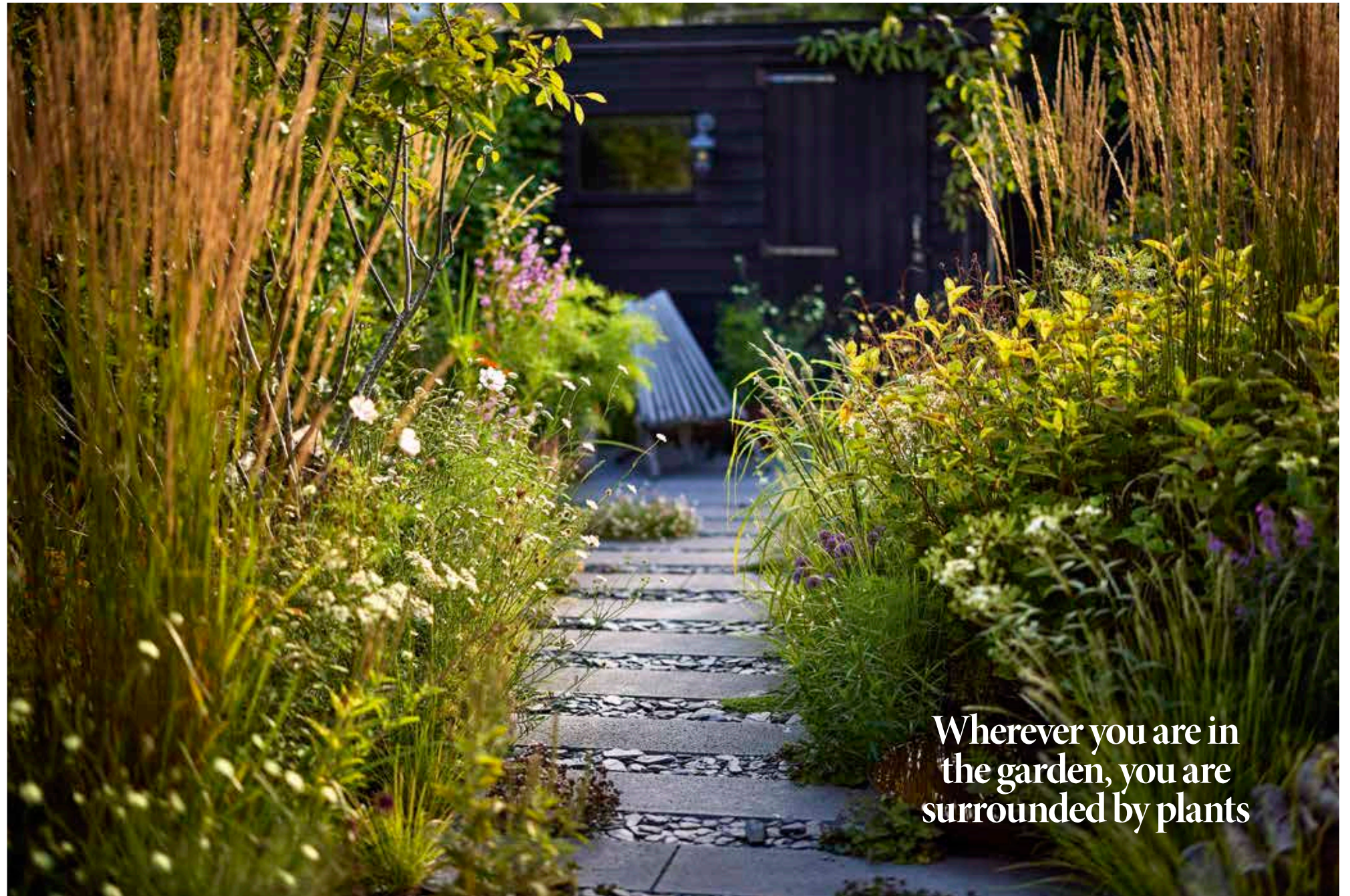
## An intriguing palette of plants

Stefano specified a wide variety of plants and owner Marianne has happily embraced the task of caring for them. "Working in this garden teaches me many lessons and helps keep me sane," she says. "Stefano has introduced me to plants that were new to me that I have since come to love, such as the toad lily, *Tricyrtis formosana*, which flowers from late summer through into the autumn."

Choice shrubs give the backbone to the planting, with two different witch hazels for late winter interest and several roses, including rambling creamy-yellow *Rosa* 'Lykkefund' and *Rosa* 'Geranium' with red flowers followed by large hips in autumn. As space is at a premium, no vertical surface is wasted. Climbers include cultivars of *Akebia quinata* – both cream-flowered 'White Chocolate' and purple-tinted 'Amethyst Glow' – as well as *Clematis* 'Apple Blossom', which has wonderful almond-scented flowers in spring.

The airy effect has been achieved with a variety of 'dotty' perennials. *Sanguisorba* 'Burr Blanc' is a favourite with good height (1-1.2m) and beautiful white flowers, while the smaller *S.* 'Chocolate Tip', has dark-maroon flower spikes. *Scabiosa columbaria* subsp. *ochroleuca* is a dainty addition, with masses of creamy-yellow flowers on wiry stems that dance about in the breeze.





Wherever you are in the garden, you are surrounded by plants

## KEY PLANTS

**1 *Lythrum salicaria* 'Swirl'** A cultivar of purple loosestrife, a summer-flowering perennial with upright flower spikes; a magnet for bees. Height and spread: 1m x 50cm. RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b<sup>†</sup>.

**2 *Schizachyrium scoparium* 'Ha Ha Tonka'** With multi-season appeal, this new grass selected by Piet Oudolf and Cassian Schmidt has hairy, pale-green leaves that turn shades of red and copper in autumn. 1m x 1m. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b.

**3 *Sambucus nigra* f. *porphyrophylla* 'Eva'** Picking up on the dark colouring of the paving, this spectacular shrub – an elderflower – has striking, near-black, dissected foliage and pale-pink flowers that appear in spring. 3m x 2m. AGM\*. RHS H6, USDA 5a-8b.

**4 *Nigella damascena* 'Albion Black Pod'** The turban-like seedpods of this annual, known as love-in-a-mist, are just as attractive as its white flowers. 45cm x 40cm. RHS H3.

<sup>†</sup>Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. <sup>‡</sup>Hardiness ratings given where available.

▷ I have tried to bring the planting as close to the house as possible," says Stefano. On both sides of the garden – sunny on the left and shadier on the right – the planting is airy, with perennials such as *Actaea*, *Sanguisorba* and *Lythrum* that move with the wind and blend easily together.

About 30 per cent of the planting is grasses, including *Sesleria*, *Calamagrostis* and *Schizachyrium*, which help knit the perennials together to give a soft, naturalistic effect. To blur the boundaries between the hardscaping and the beds, Stefano has used creeping plants such as *Mentha requienii*, *Viola riviniana* Purpurea Group and *Thymus serpyllum*. *Erigeron karvinskianus* self-seeds itself around, providing long-lasting interest, and to add height, Stefano took a multi-stemmed *Amelanchier* Marianne was growing in a pot and planted it, along with two others, in the beds, bringing a sense of rhythm to the design.

"Marianne wanted to be able to engage with nature and for Lizzy to have the opportunity to do the same," says Stefano. "It has been very rewarding for me, because she takes such an active role in the garden and often shares images with me of what she has observed." To satisfy Marianne's wish to

increase biodiversity in the garden, Stefano has introduced several sets of log piles that provide both habitat and sculptural and textural interest. A circular Corten steel pond has already attracted frogs.

Marianne potters in the garden every day after work and says that the redesign has made a huge difference to the family. It not only provides somewhere to dine outside, it also gives them something interesting to look at for 365 days of the year. "Our daughter plays in the garden all year round and there's room to set up a tent where we sometimes sleep in the summer. We see beetles, bees and birds and recently had hedgehogs here. I find it incredible how quickly wildlife has found our garden now that we are providing some habitat. Stefano listened to our wishes and has provided us with something that suits us perfectly," she says. "Winters seem much shorter than before because there is something of interest all year round; always something to look forward to." □

### USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Stefano Marinaz's work at [stefanomarinez.com](http://stefanomarinez.com)

**Above** The path through the garden to one of the two stylish EcoChairs by EcoFurn curves diagonally, partially obscuring the view, which adds both intrigue and design interest. Marianne describes the dense planting that Stefano has provided as "a magical explosion of different textures and shades of green" and enjoys gardening here almost every day after work, as a way of winding down.