

STEFANO MARINAZ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

CHURCH BARN

Braintree, Essex, England, 2020



When landscape architect Stefano Marinaz first arrived at this barn conversion, he found a large, unsympathetic lawn and patio, and a disproportionately large parking area. The clients' request was merely to screen an unsightly septic tank and reinvigorate a planting bed, but for Marinaz, who has a background in agronomy and a reputation for innovative, sustainable planting, there was far greater potential to change this 700-square-metre (7,500-square-foot) garden. Taking his cue from the surrounding countryside, he created a structure of

woody plants and hedges, lush grasses and herbaceous perennials for texture and colour. Informal interconnecting paths divide the garden and lead to three organically shaped open areas, one for sunbathing, another focused on a firepit, and the third somewhere to sit in the sunshine. A long season of interest and low-maintenance regime was created using a wide range of plant groups – bulbs, annuals, grasses, perennials, shrubs and trees – while piles of logs set within the planting create habitat for insects. Marinaz also designed the bespoke furniture for the fire-pit

area, which is surrounded by subtle greens and blues in the form of lavender-flowered Nepeta racemosa 'Walker's Low' and potted Salvia × sylvestris 'Dear Anja', mingling with the paler Nigella damascena (love-in-a-mist). The former parking area has been transformed into a stylish courtyard filled with pots, bordered by bespoke rust-coloured, mild-steel estate fencing inspired by the barn's featheredge cladding. Beyond this tranquil garden stands the borrowed outlook of the ancient village church and lime trees, bringing a sense of permanence and antiquity.