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# GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

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# MAKING TIME

Faced with a tight deadline, designer Stefano Marinaz came up with a practical design for this small, verdant, urban garden that's perfect for entertaining

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PHOTOGRAPHS ALISTER THORPE

When time is tight, sticking to a deadline is vital, and that was the challenge this garden in Amsterdam presented for designer Stefano Marinaz. "My clients are Australian and were planning on being in Amsterdam for just a couple of years," he explains, "so we only had two months to remodel the front and back garden, ready for a summer of entertaining and being outside."

And what a transformation in 60 short days. The front garden, of 75 square metres, has gone from grey and hard to lush and calm, while satisfying the client's request for a car parking space and a store for a cargo bike. The rear garden of 165 square metres backs onto the famous Vondelpark, and Stefano blurred its boundaries using texture, colour and focused repetition of planting with year-round interest.

Stefano was recommended to the clients by their interior designer. "Although it was a historical house, the internal refurbishment was modern and bright, and that had to extend to the garden too," he explains. As a result, the rear garden is, on plan, relatively simple, but as with all Stefano's projects, it's the details and relationships between materials that make the design come alive.

The garden features a large, striking planting bed placed rather unconventionally in the middle of the space. Stefano brings the planting centre stage and close to the house like this on many of his projects. "It filters the view of the furniture beyond from inside the house, and gives a more immersive experience while in the garden by completely surrounding you with plants. It also creates more depth as your eye has the multi-stem trees, shrubs and pots to pause upon before exploring further into the garden."

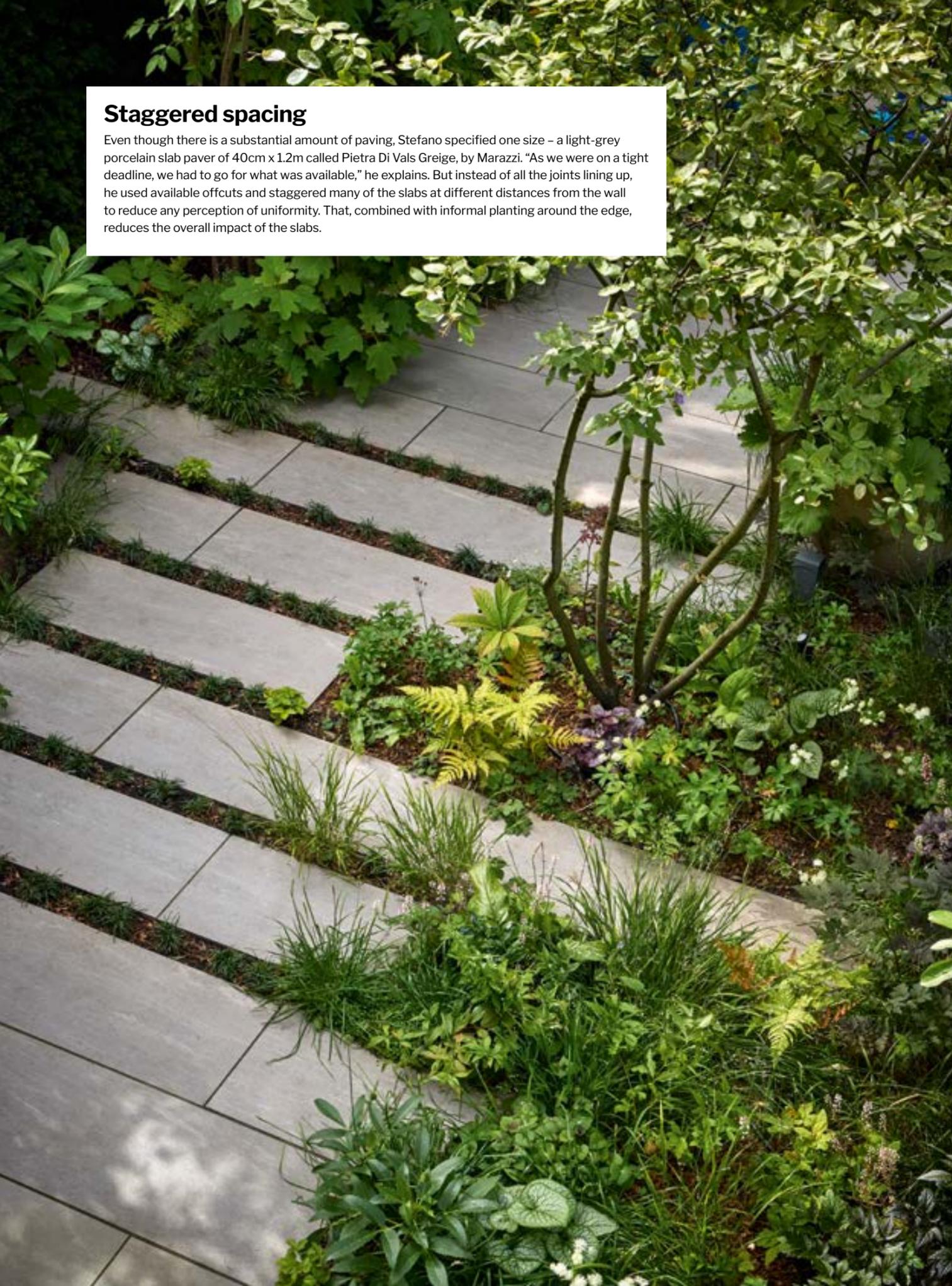
Trees play a huge part, as do shrubs, perennials and bulbs, as well as strategically placed asymmetrical containers by Atelier Vierkant. The bright blue garden furniture offers a touch of fun and, along with space for barbecuing and socialising, make this a stellar outdoor entertaining space.

Whatever your take on city living, no one can deny the importance of being surrounded by planting, and habitable spaces that make being outside a joy. While the family were on a short timescale for their secondment in Amsterdam, their legacy will be a garden full of delight, details and planting to last a lifetime. ▷

Turn the page to discover more of this garden

## Staggered spacing

Even though there is a substantial amount of paving, Stefano specified one size – a light-grey porcelain slab paver of 40cm x 1.2m called Pietra Di Vals Greige, by Marazzi. “As we were on a tight deadline, we had to go for what was available,” he explains. But instead of all the joints lining up, he used available offcuts and staggered many of the slabs at different distances from the wall to reduce any perception of uniformity. That, combined with informal planting around the edge, reduces the overall impact of the slabs.



## Blurring the boundaries

Located alongside the leafy environs of Vondelpark, the rear garden benefits from ‘borrowing’ the park’s large, mature trees, creating a woodland-edge feel. With judicious placement of trees in the garden itself, including *Pinus sylvestris* and *Amelanchier x lamarckii*, unwanted views of the park’s waste-bin storage area were blocked. With the addition of shrubs and perennials, as well as evergreen climber *Trachelospermum jasminoides* along one side, the boundary yew (*Taxus baccata*) hedge almost becomes invisible. “There was also another yew nearer the house, so we kept it on site, dug it up and used it as screening for the air-conditioning unit that was on the back of the garage,” says Stefano.

## Entertaining time

Much of the design was about getting people from the house out into the garden for entertaining, relaxation and enjoyment. A moveable barbecue on one side of the garden has its own planting bay. From the drawing room, a Lounge by Paola Lenti sofa and armchair in bold blue shades are clearly visible. “We tried different colours for the seating,” says Stefano, “and settled on blues, which also reflect the clients’ vibrant and colourful outlook.” The dining table set by Desalto is intentionally larger than the sofa area to accommodate plenty of friends and family, but also to balance out the blue colours.



## Planting partners

Every element of the garden is surrounded by planting, an intentional design trick by Stefano to “soften” the experience outside. “As with all my gardens, the conditions decide the planting palette,” he explains. “So a lot of dappled light meant the palette here was a mix of shrubs, grasses and perennials.”

At the top layer, 12 trees were added at the rear and five to the front. Multi-stem trees are particularly loved by designers, and rightly so – they add interest and focus attention, but don’t block views or other planting – and you can’t go far wrong with amelanchier, with its white flowers in spring and superb autumn colour. More unusual trees were also specified, including *Vitex agnus-castus* (great for fragrant flowers and pollinators alike), *Chionanthus retusus* and *Ginkgo biloba*, which bring a range of habit and leaf type.

Shrubs abound, from evergreen *Sarcococca confusa* to *Edgeworthia chrysantha*, and even majestic *Daphne odora*. Lower down are various ferns and perennials that love the woodland-edge feel, including purple-blue *Geranium Rozanne* (= ‘Gerwat’), *Tricyrtis formosana*, brunneras and epimediums. Thirty per cent of the planting is grasses, with a few *Deschampsia cespitosa* ‘Goldtau’ dotted around, along with several *Sesleria* ‘Greenlee’ offering year-round interest. In such a small space, there is a veritable tapestry of texture, tone and colour. □