

# URBAN OASIS

Clever design and a profusion of foliage have created a plant-lover's paradise in this compact city garden inspired by a passion for modernism.



**DESIGNER PROFILE** A former art director in the advertising industry, Declan Buckley retrained as a garden designer to pursue a career that embraced his lifelong love of plants. He set up his own design studio 16 years ago and now has a portfolio of both private and corporate clients in Britain and beyond.

**WHAT WAS THE BRIEF FOR THIS GARDEN?** This long, narrow space belongs to a good friend of mine who lives quite close to me in north London. She adores plants and wanted to include a range of specimens, some of which were given to her by her father. As her home is full of modernist design, we thought it would make sense for the furniture outside to echo this. When I first saw the plot, it had a path down the middle, with grass on either side and thin borders hugging the boundaries, so I almost had a blank canvas to work with.

**IS THERE A CONCEPT BEHIND YOUR DESIGN?** I was inspired by my client's love of modernism. I wanted to create a journey through the garden by revealing it little by little, rather than unveiling the entire space immediately. Blocks of planting and paving interrupt the line of the garden, rather like one of Piet Mondrian's iconic paintings. Near the house we dug out a patio to provide space for a pond and the client's heirloom specimens. This leads into an area in the middle of the garden that is devoted to plants. Next, is a paved terrace marking the start of the sunny section of the plot. Beyond this is a meadow, filled with wildflowers, grasses and raised beds for growing vegetables.

**TELL US ABOUT THE PLANTING YOU HAVE USED.** I always start with the structural plants: trees, shrubs and climbers. To maximise the space yet maintain a look of abundant growth, I have fixed trellises around the garden and covered them with *Trachelospermum jasminoides* (star jasmine), which has evergreen leaves and scented white flowers in summer. I also added to the existing trees with red-stemmed birches, an *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki' (coral-bark maple) and an unusual aralia, together with wedge-shaped clipped box. The planting between these structural elements includes grasses, ferns, *Libertia* and *Astrantia*.

**IS IT HARD TO SUSTAIN THE LOOK THROUGHOUT THE YEAR?** The beds are planted with a range of bulbs that flower in spring, such as *Narcissus* 'Thalia', tulips and alliums 'Purple Sensation' and 'Mount Everest'. As these die down, the grasses and perennial flowers take over. I have also used a white viola to edge the patio, and perennials, including *Anemone x hybrida* 'Honorine Jobert' (Japanese anemone), echinacea and *Crocus x crocosmiflora* 'Babylon', for late-season colour.

**WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR DESIGNING LONG, THIN GARDENS?** Try to break them up so that the eye doesn't travel straight to the back of the plot, as this emphasises their narrowness. Disguise the boundaries by using climbers that don't take up too much ground space and trees

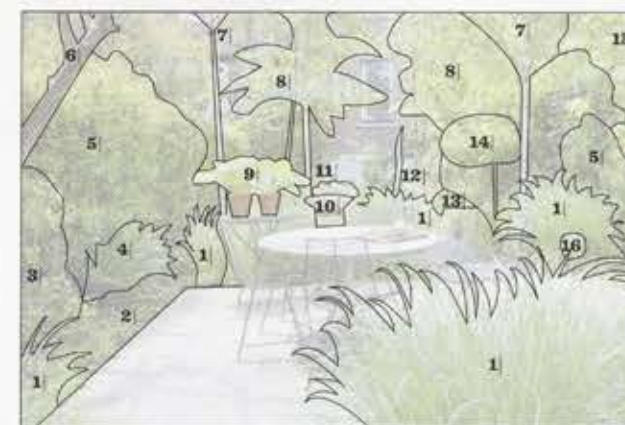


with light canopies that create dappled shade; birches and aralias are ideal. Make a note of where the sun shines in your garden, too, and position your patio in a warm area, which may not necessarily be next to the house. When choosing plants, don't be afraid to think big, as small plants can, in fact, make a narrow garden look even more cramped.

**WHICH GRASSES CAN YOU RECOMMEND FOR SCREENING?** I have used miscanthus here. Although it's deciduous, the stems and flowers remain intact throughout winter. As well as 'Sarabande', which has arching leaves with a white stripe and coppery flowers, try 'Dronning Ingrid'; its red-tinted flowerheads create a focal point in autumn. I also love *Miscanthus* 'Emmanuel Lapage', which is almost evergreen and has pinky-red flowers. *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' is another reliable grass; its tall plume-like flowerheads make a beautiful, temporary screen. □

INTERVIEW ZIA ALLAWAY PHOTOGRAPHY MARIANNE MAJERUS

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## KEY PLANTS

- 1: *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Sarabande'
- 2: *Viola cornuta* Alba Group
- 3: *Rosa* 'Mme Alfred Carrière'
- 4: *Polystichum setiferum* (soft shield fern)
- 5: *Trachelospermum jasminoides*
- 6: *Cotoneaster lacteus*
- 7: *Betula albosinensis* 'Fascination' (Chinese red birch)
- 8: *Aralia chinensis*
- 9: *Hosta* 'Sum and Substance'
- 10: *Sempervivum* (houseleeks)
- 11: *Libertia grandiflora*
- 12: *Digitalis purpurea* f. *albiflora* (white foxglove)
- 13: *Astrantia* 'Roma'
- 14: *Heptacodium miconioides* (seven son flower tree)
- 15: *Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki'
- 16: *Allium* 'Mount Everest'

## WHERE TO BUY

**Crüg Farm Plants.**  
01248 670232,  
crug-farm.co.uk  
**Ornamental Grasses.**  
01206 382861,  
ornamentalgrass.co.uk  
**Burncoose Nurseries.**  
01209 860316,  
burncoose.co.uk  
**Majestic Trees.**  
01582 843881,  
majestictrees.co.uk  
**Tropical Britain.**  
020 8894 3099,  
tropicalbritain.co.uk

## LANDSCAPING

The patio is paved with black basalt and the paths are made of black basalt chips. The Tulip table is an Eero Saarinen design and the Leaf sled chairs are by Lievore Altherr Molina.

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**Natural Stone.**  
01708 867237, ced.ltd.uk  
**Twentytwentyone.**  
020 7288 1996,  
twentytwentyone.com

## CONTACT DETAILS

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