

REACH FOR THE SKY

This stylish space is sheltered by a fringe of Mediterranean plants designed to enhance dramatic views of the London skyline.



DESIGNER PROFILE Landscape designer, photographer and writer Amir Schlezinger was born in Israel. In 1993, he moved from New York to London, where he gained a degree in landscape design and set up his design studio, MyLandscapes, in 2002. Amir specialises in contemporary urban gardens and roof terraces.

CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE BRIEF? The clients are a young couple who wanted their drab roof terrace transformed into a contemporary outdoor room for entertaining and relaxing. It is a long, thin space on the fourth floor of an old building in Covent Garden, which is exposed to wind and strong sunlight all year round and has a thrilling 360-degree view of the city.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH THE DESIGN? I carved up the space into three distinct areas: a tiled breakfast patio (shown here) close to the apartment's entrance; a deck with a fully equipped outdoor kitchen; and a living space next to an artificial grass sun lounge area at the back. The terrace is edged with raised planters filled with Mediterranean plants, and the design gives the clients the luxurious yet practical outdoor rooms they were looking for.

WHAT PROBLEMS DID YOU HAVE TO OVERCOME? The logistics were complex and required months of planning. Although the terrace and its reinforced floors already existed, we had to construct scaffolding around the building to repair the waterproofing. The building also has very limited access, a factor that can increase the time and cost of a project. We had to remove the old decking and rubble, and bring in all the new materials and equipment via a furniture lift that was available only between 8 and 11am. We also had to pay fees to Westminster Council to suspend the parking bays surrounding the building so that we could store the building materials. Through all this, the clients were very enthusiastic and supportive, and played a major part in ensuring the project ran smoothly.

WHAT DICTATED YOUR CHOICE OF PLANTS? I decided to use many of the Mediterranean plants I love, such as olive trees, lavender, cordylines, *Arbutus*, euphorbia and *Philomis*, all of which cope well with sun and wind and enjoy the milder winter temperatures here in the city. I also mixed tall plants that offer shelter with low planting that allows clear views of the London landmarks that surround the terrace, including Nelson's Column, the London Eye and the Royal Opera House.

DO ROOF TERRACES REQUIRE MUCH MAINTENANCE? I always recommend installing an automatic irrigation system because all plants in containers need regular watering, particularly in summer, even if they are drought tolerant like the ones used here. Also, you need to make sure that your planters have good drainage to stop



them becoming waterlogged, which could risk flooding the terrace. Some of the plants require a little pruning once or twice a year, but I chose species that are generally low maintenance for my busy clients, who travel frequently and have little time to spare. The clients employ a gardener twice a year to tidy up.

WHAT FACTORS AFFECT YOUR CHOICE OF FLOORING? The most important thing to consider with a roof garden is weight. All paving materials must be assessed to ensure they meet the load-bearing regulations of the building; and I often use a combination of decking and tiles, rather than paving stones. The tiles here are porcelain and in the sun lounge area I laid artificial grass, which provides a beautiful soft, green foil for the furniture and planters, and injects colour and texture into the design. □

INTERVIEW ZIA ALLAWAY
PHOTOGRAPHY MARIANNE MAJERUS

“
I mixed tall plants that offer shelter with low planting that allows clear views of the London landmarks.”



KEY PLANTS

- 1 | *Lavandula angustifolia* Munstead
- 2 | *Cordyline australis*
- 3 | *Pseudopanax* 'Purpurea'
- 4 | *Bergenia ciliata* 'Dumbo'
- 5 | *Phillyrea angustifolia*
- 6 | *Philomis bourgaei*

WHERE TO BUY

Binny Plants
01506 858931
binnyplants.com

Burncoose Nurseries
01209 860316
burncoose.co.uk

The Garden Centre Group
0344 272 3000
thegardencentregroup.co.uk

Paramount Plants
020 8367 8809
paramountplants.co.uk

LANDSCAPING AND ACCESSORIES

The terrace is paved with porcelain tiles and decked with balau hardwood. The bespoke steel planters were designed by Amir. The table is by Alexander Rose and the Vasman chairs are from Ikon.

WHERE TO BUY

Mandarin Stone
0160 071 5444
mandarinstone.com

A good choice of porcelain tiles for outdoor use.

Southgate Timber
01277 890783
southgate@nber.co.uk

Specialist in hardwood decking materials.

Alexander Rose
01444 258931
alexander.rose.co.uk

For contemporary and traditional garden furniture.

Ikon
020 3645 0000
ikon.com/gb

CONTACT DETAILS

Amir Schlezinger
020 8245 9151
mylandscapes.co.uk