

EASTERN PROMISE

Wrapped in luxuriant foliage, this tranquil garden has a Japanese mood that is far removed from the suburban streets beyond



DESIGNER PROFILE Inspired by work experience on a kibbutz during his teenage years, Spencer Viner studied landscape architecture at Leeds Metropolitan University. In 2001, he set up his own design and planting consultation business, North Eleven, which creates contemporary schemes in London, the South East and overseas.

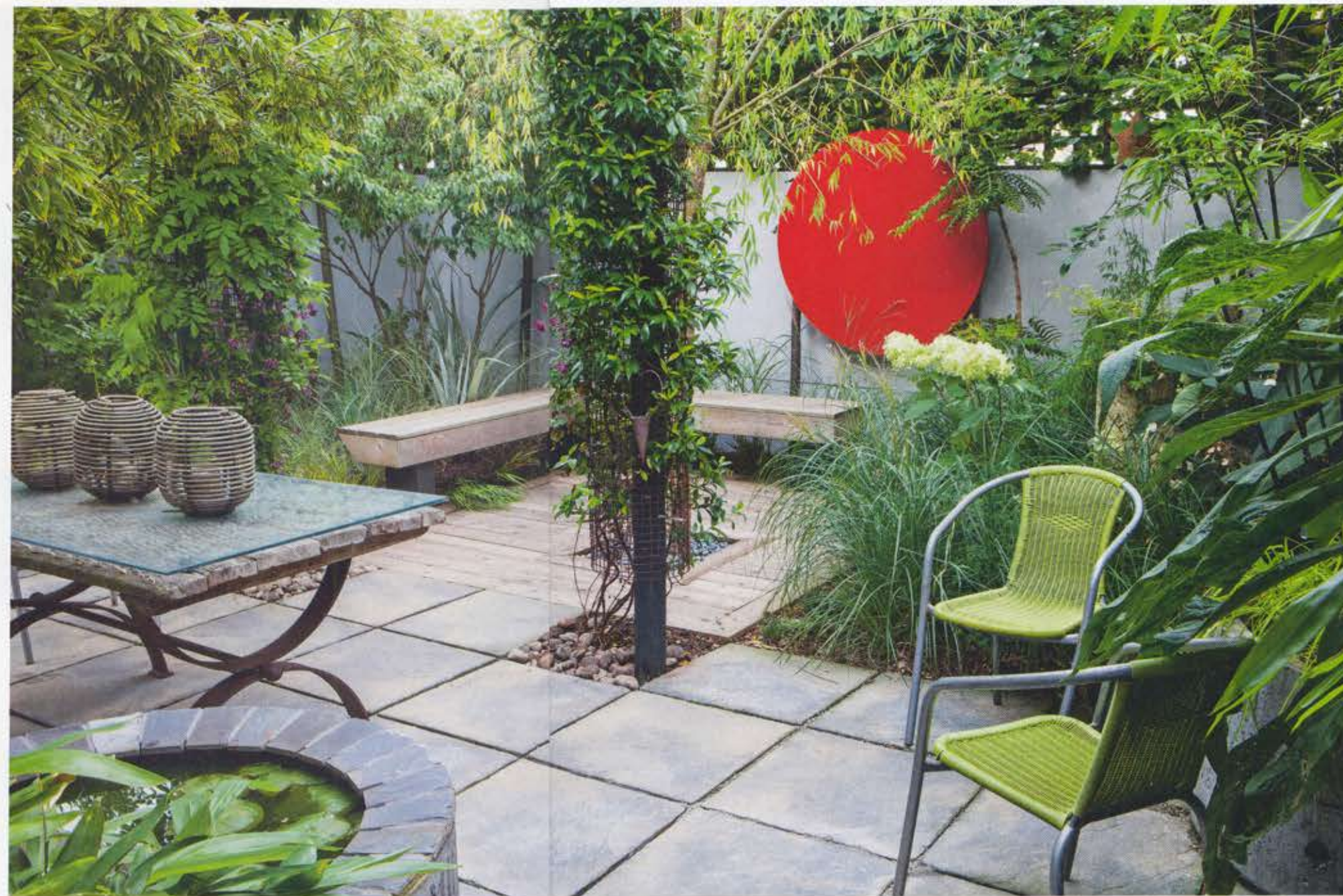
CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT THE GARDEN? This is my own garden in north London. It is attached to an attractive Edwardian house but, as the surrounding suburban area is pretty uninspiring, I decided to create an enclosed space that generated its own views, while also blocking out the noise from the streets. The design is influenced by Japanese gardens and, as it's my garden, I had the luxury of time, which allowed me to carefully assess how the sun moved across the space and where best to place the plants and seating areas.

WHY DID YOU DIVIDE UP THE SPACE? Although the garden is tiny, measuring just twenty-one square feet, I wanted to create several zones that each had a different atmosphere. I used hard landscaping to convey the idea of rooms, with a paved dining area beneath a large pergola that leads to a decked section edged by planting and a wooden bench; the legs of the pergola act as a doorway from one zone to another. The proportions are based on the size of one of the paving stones, so each section of the garden is a multiple of that paver. This creates the visual harmony that's so important in small garden designs.

HOW DID YOU ACHIEVE THE SENSE OF TRANQUILITY? The perimeter screens, made from marine plywood painted in a soft grey, together with the pleached trees above, shield the garden, providing a sense of privacy. I've also created a woodland effect with small trees, shrubs and grasses planted in generous borders. The dappled light that filters through the willow in the centre of the deck (the roots of which are in a large plastic tub to restrict its size) also contributes to the garden's magic.

WHAT JAPANESE EFFECTS DID YOU INCLUDE? In Japanese gardens the dominant shade is green with a burst of colour here and there, so I've used the iconic symbol of a setting sun, made from plywood, as a point of focus and to inspire meditation. Most of the plants also originate from Japan, and include the black-stemmed bamboo *Phyllostachys nigra*, the bright-green grass *Hakonechloa* and a wisteria, which is growing up one of the legs of the pergola. Water, another important element in Japanese gardens, features in the form of a small pool planted with a miniature water lily. The pool is set into an industrial concrete drainage ring lined with plastic and topped with slate tiles.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE FURNITURE? The table was given to me by a client; it's an old textile industry piece and I added the glass top to give it a modern spin. I picked up the green chairs at a flea market in Antwerp and designed the cedar wood bench myself to fit into the

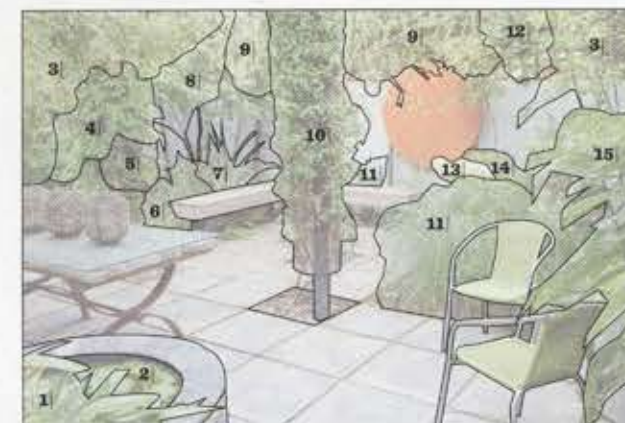


corner. Mixing furniture of different styles helps to add interest, but take care not to include too many eclectic pieces or colours in a small space, as the overall effect can be a bit messy.

WHICH PLANTS DO YOU RECOMMEND FOR TINY GARDENS? When designing a small space, use plants that direct the eye towards the sky and focus on strong leaf shapes, which will provide a longer season of interest than flowers. I have planted climbers up the pergola, such as wisteria, which has beautiful leaves and long tresses of scented purple flowers in May; a *Trachelospermum jasminoides* (star jasmine), which is evergreen with tiny, white, highly scented summer flowers; and some late-flowering clematis. I have also used the small tree *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*, which makes a good focal point in spring, when it is covered with large white flowers, and in autumn, when its leaves turn fiery red. □

INTERVIEW ZIA ALLAWAY PHOTOGRAPHY MARIANNE MAJERUS

“I wanted to create zones, each with a distinct atmosphere, so I used hard landscaping to convey the idea of a series of rooms.”



KEY PLANTS

- 1) *Sasa veitchii*
- 2) Dwarf water lily
- 3) *Phyllostachys nigra*
- 4) *Wisteria sinensis*
- 5) Clematis 'Purpurea Plena Elegans'
- 6) *Hakonechloa macra*
- 7) *Astelia chathamica*
- 8) *Cornus kousa* var. *chinensis*
- 9) *Salix babylonica* (weeping willow)
- 10) *Trachelospermum jasminoides*
- 11) *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Yakushima Dwarf'
- 12) *Tilia cordata* (small-leaved lime)
- 13) *Hydrangea paniculata*
- 14) *Mahonia owakensis* subsp. *formosifolia*
- 15) *Echium pininana*

PLANT SUPPLIERS

Barcham 01353 720950, barcham.co.uk
Burncoose Nurseries 01209 660316, burncoose.co.uk
Crocus 01344 578000, crocus.co.uk
Paramount Plants and Gardens 020 8367 8809, paramountplants.co.uk

LANDSCAPING SUPPLIERS

The **paving** is Firestone in Dusk (Marshall's 0370 120 7474, marshall's.co.uk) and the **decking** is cedar wood (Silva Timber Products, 01895 271300, silvatimber.co.uk). The **water feature** is made from concrete drainage chamber rings (CPM, 0117 981 2791, cpm-group.com), topped with slate tiles. The **screens** and **rising sun feature** are made from marine plywood (Jewson, jewson.co.uk).

CONTACT DETAILS

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