

HEART OF STONE

Strong shapes and snow-covered plants create a beautiful wintry scene in this city garden



DESIGNER PROFILE Julie Toll has been designing gardens since 1982, and trained in horticulture before studying to become a garden designer at The English Gardening School. She has won seven Gold medals at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and is renowned for her naturalistic style and colourful planting schemes.

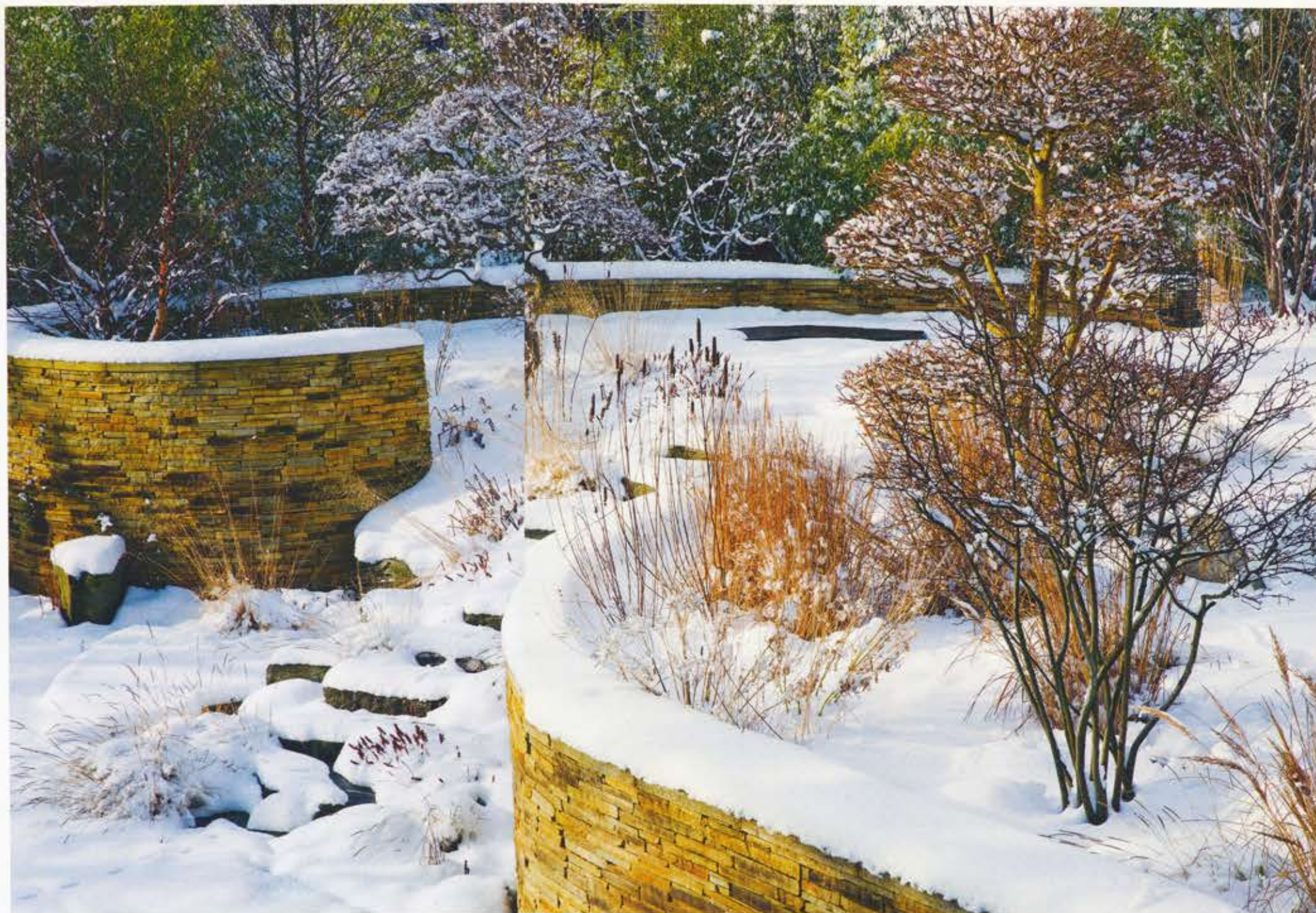
WHAT WAS THE BRIEF? My client wanted the garden to complement the style and lines of her newly renovated house. Though it's in London, this space has a rural feel as it is on a hilltop and backs on to a large park. The design was to have a natural look and strong architectural structure, as well as areas for entertaining and relaxing. I was also asked to make the most of the views beyond the boundaries.

HOW DID YOU APPROACH THE DESIGN? I presented my ideas with a photograph of a garden in California by the late American landscape architect Thomas Church; the union of broad sweeping curves and straight lines in his design illustrated the effect I wanted to achieve. I then created the plan, which included a sunny terrace close to the house, a swimming pool and a roof garden on one of the extensions. This view of the garden (right) shows steps leading to an elevated level with a lawn, clipped trees and a gravel area with a natural rock water feature. The garden is on a slope and the curved retaining walls add drama to the design while serving an important function. A ramped pathway winds round behind the walls, allowing easy access to the upper level for the mower and wheelbarrows.

WHAT DICTATED YOUR SELECTION OF PLANTS? This area of the garden is looked at from the house and terrace, so the plants had to perform all year round. I have included a range of small deciduous trees, clipped into cloud-like shapes, which offer blossom in spring, decorative foliage in summer and structure in winter. These are combined with perennials and grasses that have attractive stems and seed heads from late autumn to early spring. The ornamental plants are set against a backdrop of bamboos and the large trees in the park beyond.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE LANDSCAPING MATERIALS? With great care. We sourced the grey quartzite paving for the steps from Norway, and travelled there to select stones with beautiful patterns and lichen. But you don't have to go that far for high-quality materials; there are many quarries in Britain that will allow you to visit and pick your own stones. The walls are made from concrete blocks faced with Donegal quartzite, which has a lovely colour and texture.

WHICH STRUCTURAL PLANTS ARE GOOD FOR WINTER INTEREST? I love deciduous trees that look attractive when their leaves have fallen. Here, I have used *Betula nigra* (river birch), which has colourful peeling bark, most visible in winter; an *Ulmus* 'Jacqueline Hillier' (dwarf elm), which lends itself to topiary pruning; and an *Acer campestre* (field maple), which has a pleasing structure. Other trees and shrubs that

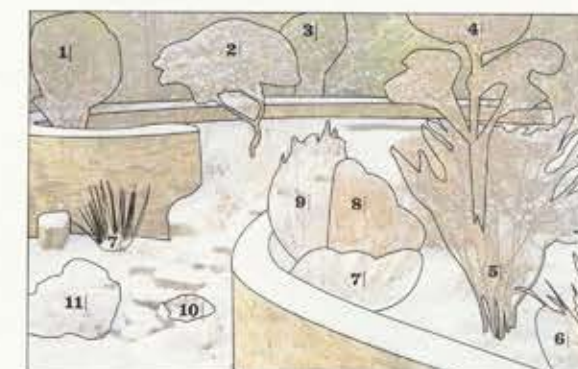


are ideal for winter interest include hazel, which can be clipped into an umbrella shape; hawthorn, with its twisted stems and red berries; and *Viburnum bodnantense*, which has a good shape and scented winter flowers. Thin your plants so you can see their forms clearly.

DO YOU HAVE ANY TIPS FOR CREATING CURVED WALLS? You will produce a smoother outline if you use small rather than large bricks, as the latter will need to be cut and may look messy. An alternative, which will not work on a very tight radius, is to use longer bricks for the straight sections and half-bricks where the structure arcs. Where a curved lawn meets a flower bed, I use a steel strip or bricks to maintain a crisp edge and keep the design looking good year after year. □

INTERVIEW ZIA ALLAWAY
PHOTOGRAPHY MARIANNE MAJERUS

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KEY PLANTS

- 1) *Betula nigra*
- 2) *Ulmus hollandica* 'Jacqueline Hillier'
- 3) *Phyllostachys nigra* 'P. aurea'
- 4) *Acer campestre*
- 5) *Amelanchier lamarckii*
- 6) *Calamagrostis brachytricha*
- 7) *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldtau' syn. 'Golden Dew'
- 8) *Panicum unguiculatum*
- 9) *Agastache* 'Blackadder'
- 10) *Panicum affine* 'Kabouter'
- 11) *Sedum autumnale*

WHERE TO BUY

BlueBell Arboretum & Nursery 01530 413700
bluebellnursery.com
Daisy Roots 07958 563355
daisyroots.com
Knoll Gardens 01202 873931
knollgardens.co.uk
Wootens of Wenhamston 01502 478258
wootensplants.com

LANDSCAPING MATERIALS

The walls are faced with Donegal quartzite, the steps are made from black granite and Opodal quartzite, and the paths are gravel.

WHERE TO BUY

CED 01708 867237
ced.ltd.uk
Stonemarket 0845 302 0603
stonemarket.co.uk

CONTACT DETAILS

Julie Toll Landscape & Garden Design
01438 310095, julietoll.co.uk