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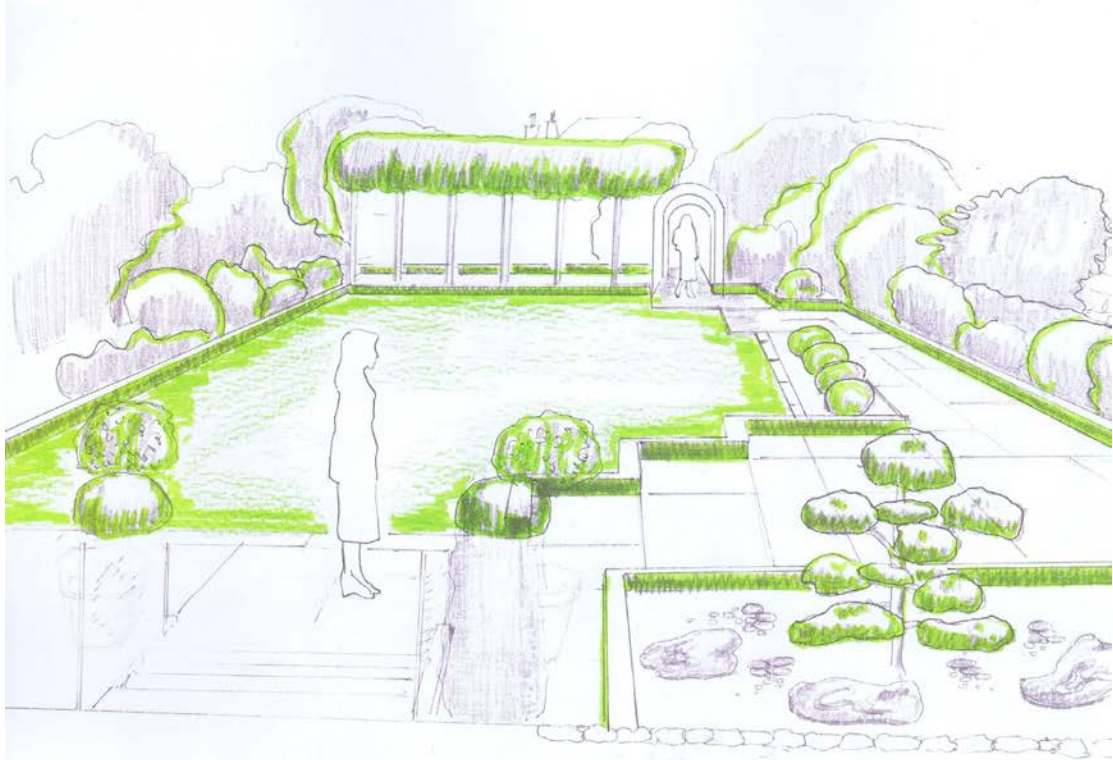
BI-MONTHLY • ISSUE 106 • MARCH & APRIL 2016 £4

# HOMES & INTERIORS

SCOTLAND

**SPRING  
IDEAS  
START  
HERE**





## CREATING A GARDEN FOR ALL SEASONS

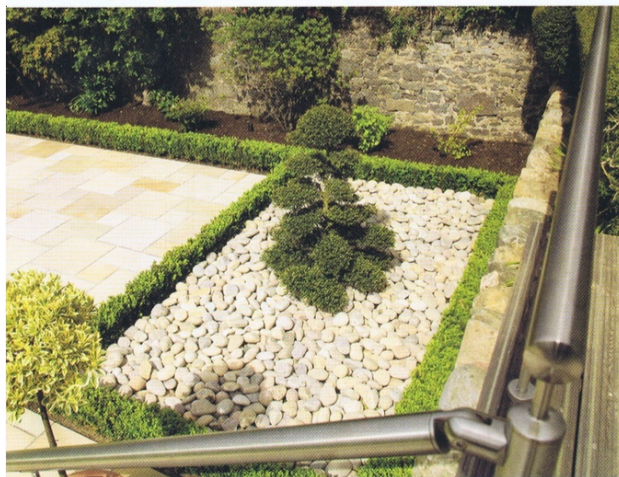
Architectural planting and hard landscaping generate interest all year round

Photography George Leslie Words Catherine Coyle

**WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN** you're commissioned to work on a garden that's already chock-full of wonderfully mature plants that have established themselves over many decades? That was the question facing Kirsty McLean, director of the Garden Design Company Scotland, when she was asked by the owners of a house in the suburbs of Aberdeen to bring their garden up to the same contemporary standards as the property's extensively renovated interior. The house, which was built in the 1940s, had belonged to the same family for two generations, and they were eager to give the garden the

same kind of attention that had recently been lavished on the interior.

This left Kirsty, an award-winning gardener who is also a guest designer on the BBC's *Beechgrove Garden*, with something of a dilemma: "This garden, which is walled and faces south-west, had been beautifully planted – and I was lucky enough to have seen it in all its glory when it was established by the current owners' family," she explains. "So what we've done is to try to capture the essence of the former planting within the new design, to reflect the renovation and the current owners' style." ▶



[Left] Kirsty's sketches show the cloud tree in the foreground would be a focal point in this structured garden. [Top] Marshalls' Versuro sawn sandstone flagstones were chosen for their light hue, to make the garden feel bright. [Above] The textures of the original stone wall, the smooth flagstones and the pebbles add interest, contrasting with both the metal balustrade and the natural forms of the plants. [Right] Topiary spheres add an extra element of definition

Since the rear of the house is predominantly glass, and therefore you don't actually have to be in the garden to see it, it was important to produce a look that would work all year round. The clients had requested a low-maintenance space that was ordered, private and full of clean lines. Kirsty had to ensure it felt both connected to its surroundings but also secluded and enclosed. "The space is wonderfully balanced in both proportion and shape," she says, "with the living accommodation and access from the rear of the house at first-floor level, which led me to look at creating a strong layout and design that can be fully appreciated from height and from the ground.

"I also wanted to 'frame' the garden with an evergreen screen and edging, to centre the focus within the garden, rather than on the views beyond. That way, you'd be fooled into imagining that this sunny, sheltered garden could be anywhere."

This is now a garden that can be enjoyed all year long, with a tight structure that allows the owners to add in flowers without taking away from the overall style of the garden. Topiary spheres provide definition and an element of texture,

with the 'cloud tree' as a focal point. The planting is layered to create privacy. "We have the mature hedging, which is all new, from the gate along the remainder of the boundary, then we have pleached *Prunus rotundifolia* which are well staked to ensure that wind does not rock their root ball, allowing them to establish their root system in the surrounding soil well."

There is extensive paving in this garden, too, and she worked with Landform Ltd to carry out the design and build aspects of the job. Marshalls' Fairstone sawn Versuro sandstone has been used, in warm caramel and creamy colours that complement the pale granite native to Aberdeen. "It is important to lay modern flagstones (which are often around 22 to 25mm thick) on a wet mortar bed to ensure that they are supported well and won't move."

This year, Kirsty plans to add in an extra layer of flowering herbaceous plants to soften the structure, as well as adding some colour and textures behind the linear box hedging.

She has managed to create a clean-lined private space, as requested, but this is still a beautifully lush and natural escape that can be enjoyed all year round. ■



[Above] The new flagstones are treated with an anti-algae product every two to three months, to minimise the need for power-washing and thus cut the risk of damaging the pointing. [Top right] The palette is simple: dark green for leaf and hedging, emerald for evergreens, and creams, white and pinks in the blooming shrubs and climbers. [Right] The clients wanted clean lines, which Kirsty has achieved with strong, heavily manicured short hedging for impact



**THE BRIEF** To create a space that could be enjoyed all year round and that would look impressive, regardless of the season.

**MAINTENANCE** The client has a gardener who does the week-to-week upkeep, with Landform Ltd maintaining all the hedging and topiary twice a year.

**DESIGNER** Kirsty McLean, The Garden Design Company, Scotland

**LANDSCAPER** Jake Dickie, Landform Ltd

“I WANTED TO FRAME THE GARDEN WITH AN EVERGREEN SCREEN, TO CENTRE THE FOCUS WITHIN, RATHER THAN ON THE VIEWS BEYOND”

