

# earth designs

By: Rolly Green

With the weather finally turning nice, everyone's using their gardens for barbecues and sheisha gatherings – there's nothing quite like a garden when the sunshine is out.

But what happens if, like most of us, you own property abroad? Chances are it will have a garden area and, if its anything like mine, it will be badly in need of much needed TLC. My 'put some ready-grown flowers in a window box' remedy doesn't always work! Now is the perfect time to get started on the garden, to ensure that when you arrive in summer you can really enjoy those long European nights and (hopefully) sunshiney days.

I met with Katrina Wells, Creative Director from Earth Designs to discover more about maximizing gardens potential. Earth Designs is a garden design and build firm based in London that has exhibited nationally in the Country Living Fair, is a member of APL (Association of Professional Landscapers) and experienced regular media coverage through her innovative and practical designs. "Our aim is to provide our clients with a garden space that reflects their lifestyles and personality, making our work stylish and innovative without being intimidating. We offer free, 'down-to-earth' consultations

through to after-care packages; we offer a total 'concept to creation' service to our clients," explains Katrina.

To help me learn more about the garden design process and about how creative and versatile you can be in your garden she took me through a couple of her projects that always receive a lot of attention and admiration.

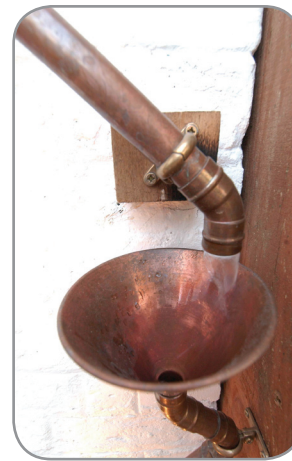
The first one is The Living Room: The space was formerly a double garage nestled between two houses. The roof had been removed, leaving a worn concrete and cobble floor, garage doors, and two rusted steel girders crossing the space. In creative terms, the brief was fairly open: to design a clean and contemporary space, suitable for

with this design, "The design was inspired by the strong sense of enclosure to the space, taking elements of a typical lounge to create something that was very much an exterior room. New railway sleepers, chosen for their clean look and contemporary feel, featured heavily as a construction material.

space. Vigilant lighting within the beds and shelving units served to create ambient lighting similar to that found in a well-planned drawing room."

The 'living room' theme was further enhanced by the inclusion of a bespoke wrought iron chandelier hanging from the cross-point of

concrete was laid to provide attractive and durable flooring. Planting was used to blur the linear appearance of the space, with architectural, spiky evergreens and lush, leafy climbers taking pride of place. A water feature constructed from a Heath Robinson-esque series of copper piping and funnels provided the finishing



entertaining yet functional enough to accommodate off-street parking for a family car.

Katrina decided to create a 'living room' feel

These were used to create raised beds around the boundaries, an integrated 'sofa' and coffee table, and a dresser-style shelving unit down one side of the

the girders. To allow for off-street parking, the existing garage doors were replaced with two large bespoke wooden gates, and pattern-imprinted

touch to the garden.

The result is just fantastic; Katrina seems to have an intrinsic instinct when it comes to interpreting people's ideas



and creating the perfect bespoke garden just for them. The use of sleepers creates an organic feel to the utilitarian space, while the architectural, spiky plants add dynamism and a sense of the exotic. This is replicated by the dramatic lighting and water feature which gives the garden another dimension – the whole mood changes

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of paving along the back and side of the house. The fences were new and in good condition, but had been painted a vivid orange which was quite heavy on the eye. The brief was to create an attractive, functional garden, suitable

for entertaining and with a space for storage out of view from the house. The client requested that some of the garden be laid to lawn, with a focal point at the bottom of the garden to enhance the view from the lounge window.



was also incorporated into this area.

“A focal point was created with the construction a sunken mosaic pool, over which the decking walkway crossed. The pool was fitted with a gentle filter to maintain water clarity while preserving its natural stillness, and underwater lighting was installed to created added ambience at night,” notes Kat. This design has all the elements I would want in my own garden; texture, lighting, water and colour, and I love the way it is all on different levels. I think it really opens the garden up and makes it a lot more interesting. The white walls, blue fence and mosaics give it an almost Spanish flavour; oh yes I could just see myself relaxing with my cats and a glass of sangria.

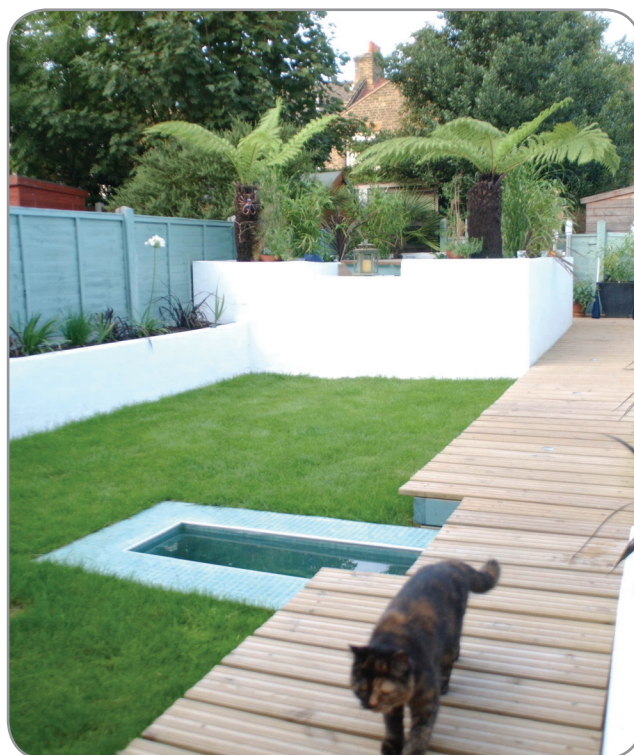
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at night-time and the running water is always guaranteed to chill out the most stressful of days. I could picture myself quite easily here; glass of Shiraz in one hand, entertaining friends, whilst the hubby slaves away over the barbecue.

All Hands On Deck is another on my favourite designs – ooh I could quite happily spend hours in this garden – either relaxing by myself or for entertaining. The space they had to start with was almost a completely blank canvas, with no existing plants or lawn, and a small amount



The design for this was to sculpt the garden with long raised beds laid around its edge, creating a clean and elegant, easy to maintain space. The strip of patio along the back of the house was overlaid with decking, from which a decking runway stretched the length of the garden alongside the right hand raised bed. At the bottom of the space a dining area, constructed of a decked table and fixed bench seating enclosed on three sides by raised bed, was placed to make the most of the afternoon and early evening sun. A fixed BBQ, adorned with mosaic tiles,