



**NEW
SERIES**
Part 2

The trick to getting the best from any garden, especially a small one, is planning. Before you begin, you need to narrow your wish-list to your top priorities. In a bigger garden, for example, you might have a barbecue area; in a small garden, you may have to settle for a space for a portable barbecue and devise a storage plan when it's not in use. Small family gardens are hardest to plan as you'll need to find room for a play area.

We asked garden designer Katrina Wells of Earth Designs to come up with three different designs. Our tip is to choose light-reflecting colours and add details you'd find indoors, such as mirrors, to increase the sense of space. As for budget, we've suggested where you can make savings. All you have to do is choose the right plan for you...

Ideal wish-list

- Somewhere to sit
- Barbecue area
- Room for dining
- Play space
- Private area
- Nice view from patio
- Storage, such as a shed

How to plan your perfect garden

Our new series shows you how to create the perfect outdoor space. This month, clever ideas to help you make the most of a small garden

The low-maintenance garden

Creating a two-level garden linked by steps and flanked by split-level pools fed with waterfalls gives the space more interest. The design is bordered by raised flowerbeds and built-in bench seating, which can seat more guests than garden chairs.

WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

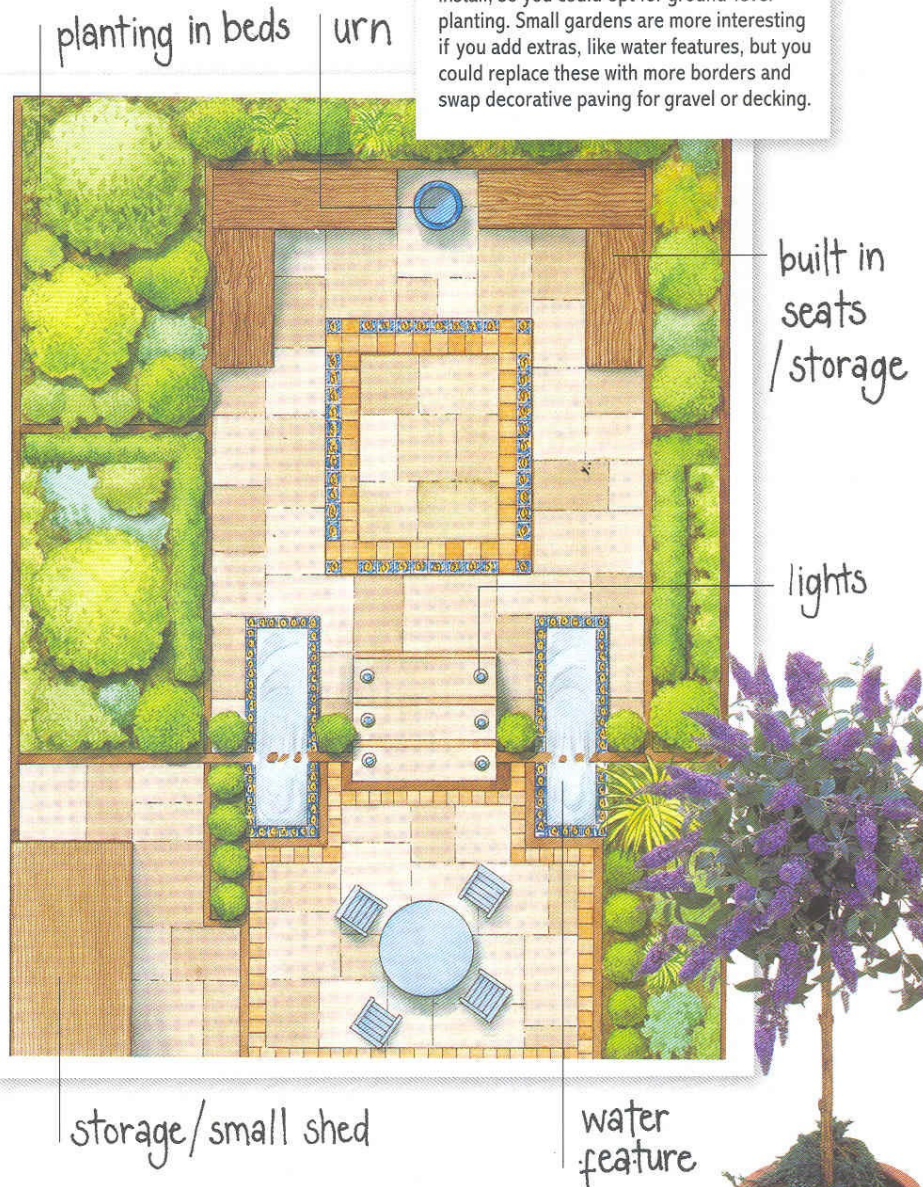
Raised beds can be much easier to look after than borders and you won't need to get on all fours to tend them. The rest of this garden is given over to paving, which will only need an occasional sweep.

ARE THERE ANY SPACE-STRETCHING TRICKS I CAN USE?

An attractive standard plant, urn or statuette at the end of the garden will provide a focal point and draw the eye to the garden's furthest part, tricking you into seeing it as larger than it is. Benches with lift-up lids give more storage. If you need a play area for children, swap tiles for decking in the lower part of the garden and sink a hidden sandpit beneath a section of it. ▶

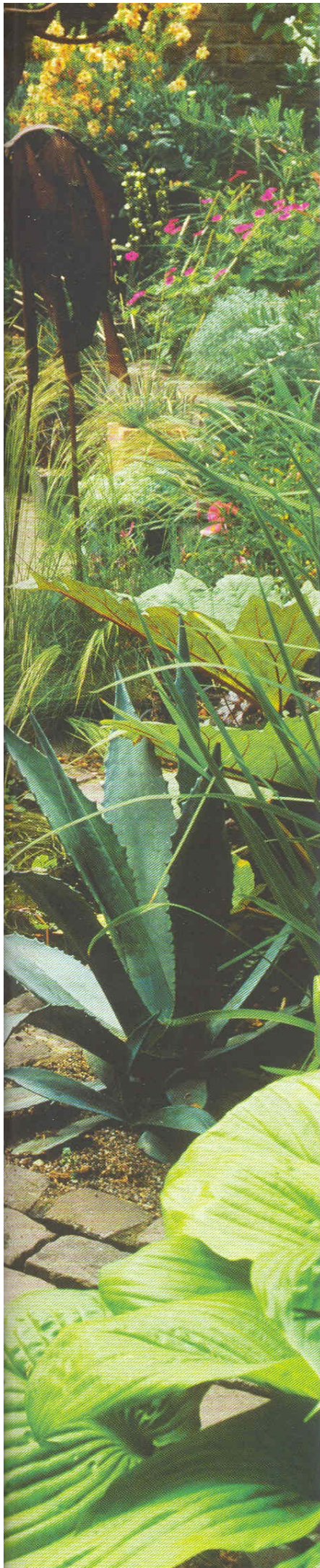
HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

Raised beds look great, but will cost money to install, so you could opt for ground-level planting. Small gardens are more interesting if you add extras, like water features, but you could replace these with more borders and swap decorative paving for gravel or decking.

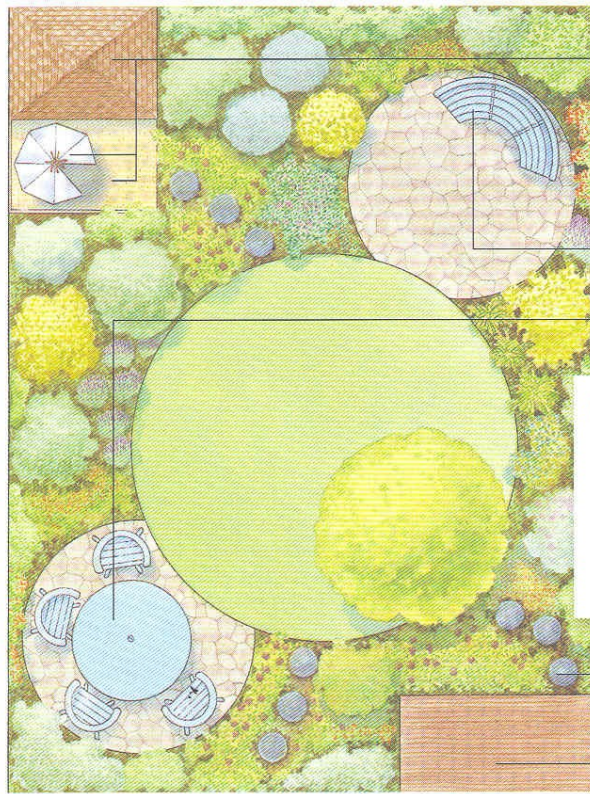


▶ This colourful buddleia is an ideal standard plant for a small garden; easy to care for, it will attract lots of bees and butterflies when it flowers

PHOTOGRAPHS: JANET SEATON/IGL, SUZIE GIBBONS/IGL, IPC IMAGES/MOMAN & HOME, IPC IMAGES/NICOLA STOCKEN TOMKINS, IPC IMAGES/GRACE ILLUSTRATIONS SANDRA POND



The compact family garden



sandpit,
treehouse
wigwam

bench

dining area

HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

This is not an expensive garden to create, but you can cut down on planting by making the central grassed area larger, or by stretching it into an oval to fill more of the borders.

stepping
stones

low storage

Strong shapes such as circles (arranged diagonally) will make a small garden appear wider and longer. At the heart of this garden is an open grassy circle (to give kids room to run about), while the smaller paved circles are used as seating/dining areas. Stepping stones lead to a tucked-away play area.

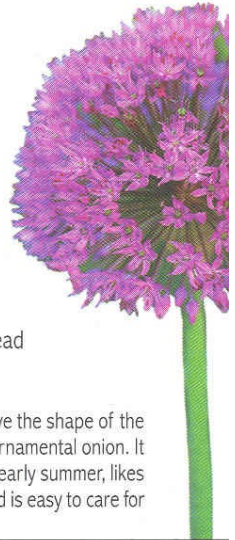
WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

The lawn will need cutting once a week in the summer, and if you go for low-maintenance plants, such as hebes, you'll only need to give it a quick tidy.

ARE THERE ANY SPACE-STRETCHING TRICKS I CAN USE?

Paint walls and fences white to make space appear bigger, keep planting in borders low to make the garden seem wider, and go for a low-level chest storage unit instead of a tall shed.

► Children love the shape of the allium, or ornamental onion. It flowers in early summer, likes most soils and is easy to care for



The secluded exotic garden

Want seclusion? Then this is the garden for you. All walls/fences have trellis panels fixed to their fronts and tops so that climbers can be trained up to hide the space from onlookers. The wide S-shaped path is cobbled for a relaxed feel, so make sure you choose a table and chairs with chunky legs to avoid wobble. Go for low-maintenance exotics, which provide year-round interest, and place large plants, such as tree ferns and a windmill palm, in the borders, so that the shed can't be seen from indoors and the bench is hidden from neighbouring houses.

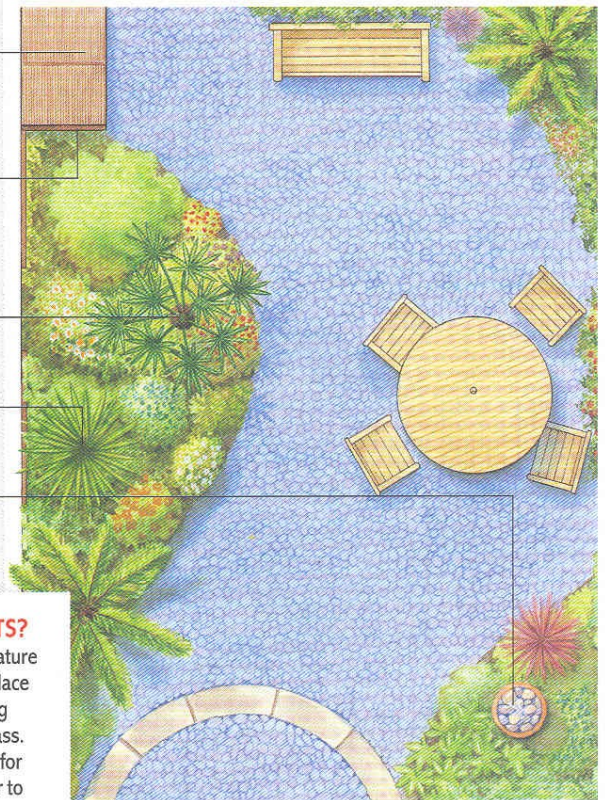
WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

Once planted, this garden will look after itself — aside from the odd pruning of climbers, such as clematis, and the addition of some bright summer blooms, like lilies or poppies.



◀ Passionflowers grow quickly, but won't damage fences or brickwork if given supports, such as a trellis, to cling to

shed
trellis on
shed
palm tree
tree fern
urn water
feature



HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

There's an urn water feature here, but you could replace this with an eye-catching plant, such as zebra grass. Swap the patio cobbles for gravel, which is cheaper to buy and easier to lay.