

A lush garden with a stone path, various flowers, and a tall metal sculpture. The garden is filled with greenery, purple and pink flowers, and a tall, conical metal sculpture with a spherical top. A stone path winds through the garden, and a stone bench is visible on the right. The overall scene is a well-maintained and colorful garden.

How to plan your perfect garden

In the third part of our series, we show you how to make the most of an awkwardly shaped garden by stealing a few designer tricks

Part
3

The sloping garden

The temptation with an awkwardly shaped garden is either to do as little as possible to it – maybe a lawn surrounded with flowerbeds – or to add too many hidden corners and details, which might work well in an enormous plot, but won't make the best of an average-sized garden. The ideal is to come up with a layout that's simple but uses design tricks to correct the shape of the garden. Better still, a clever layout can make the awkward shape an advantage, using odd corners for hidden storage or raised levels to define areas of the garden.

We asked Katrina Wells of Earth Designs to come up with three solutions for three classic problems: a sloping site, an L-shaped garden and a tapering plot. Our advice is to simplify the look of the garden, where possible, by using similar shades to unify the different elements such as decking, paving and walls. As for budget, we've suggested where you can make savings. Now all you have to do is pick the plan that's best for you.

Ideal wish-list

- A place to sit
- Barbecue area
- Room for dining
- Space for kids
- A private spot
- Storage
- Nice view

Missed parts one and two of this series? Find designs for small or long gardens at www.idealhomemagazine.co.uk

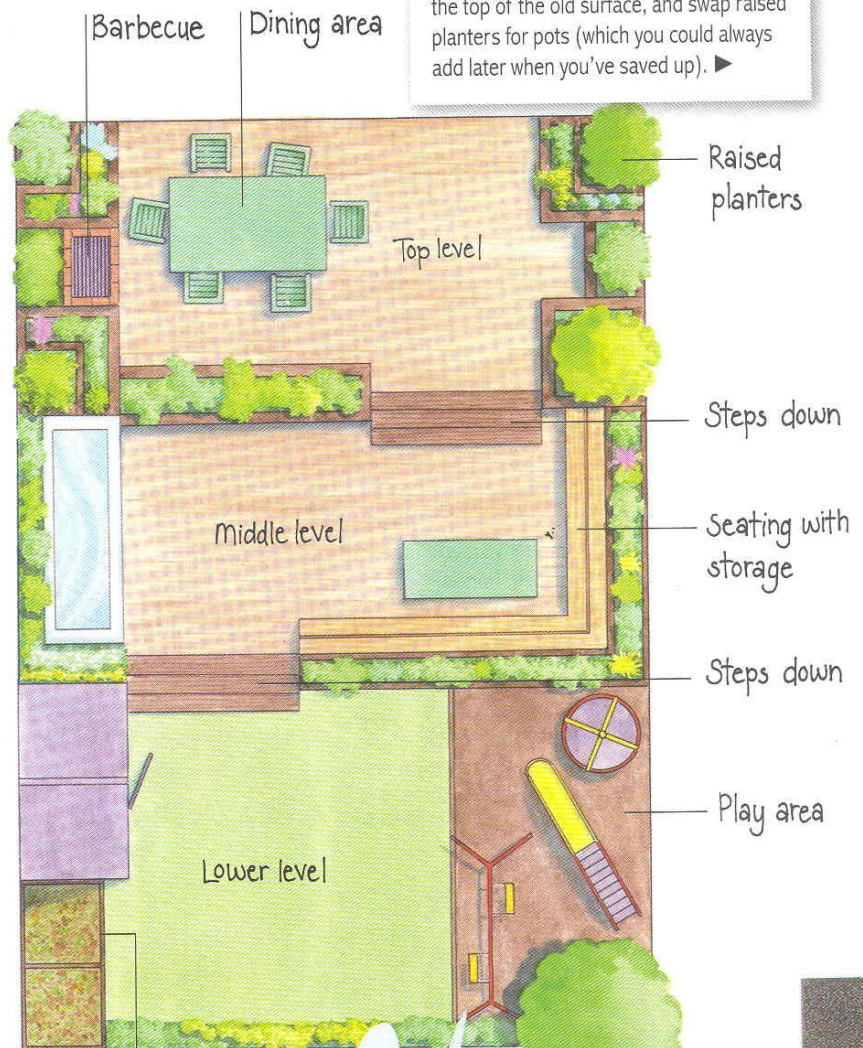
Make the most of a sloping garden by creating different levels, each with its own purpose. This design has an area right next to the house for outdoor dining and a barbecue. Then, wide steps lead down (or up, depending on which way your garden slopes) to an area with built-in seats (with lift-up lids for extra storage) and a water feature, or sandpit if you have children. The last level includes a play area and lawn, plus a shed and compost heap.

WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

The lawn will need cutting up to once a week in high summer, but if you choose raised borders planted with hardy perennials, such as hosta and astilbe, they won't need much care or constant maintenance. Add splashes of colour with drought-resistant osteospermum and gazania.

HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

Shifting earth and shoring up the terraces can be quite costly. In a gently sloping garden, save money by just decking over the top of the old surface, and swap raised planters for pots (which you could always add later when you've saved up). ▶



Screen to hide compost heap

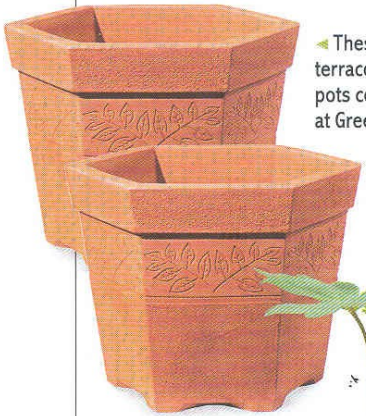
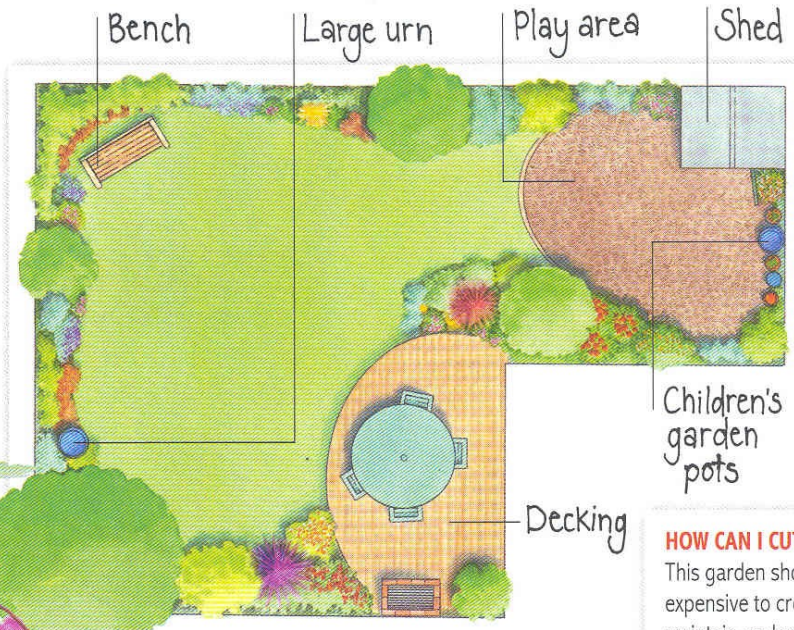


The sound of running water is really soothing, especially in a city garden. This Stakka freestanding fountain is £70 from Habitat

▶ Hardy plants that don't need lots of water, such as osteospermum, are great for a low-maintenance garden

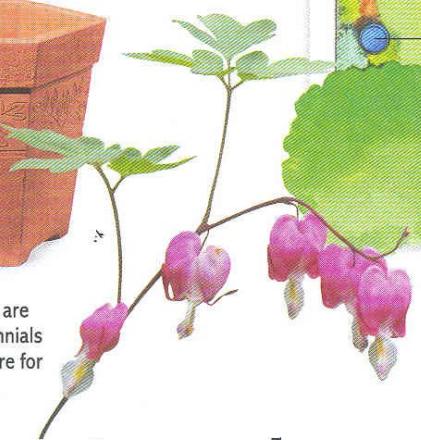
The L-shaped garden

The trouble with L-shaped gardens is that the slimmest part of the 'L' is often wasted space. Try and use it to tuck away things you don't want to see from the patio, such as the bins and shed or a play area. Keep the rest of the garden simple and break up the straight lines with a curved patio, borders and lawn to make the most of the space and give it a relaxed feel.



◀ These realistic-looking terracotta-effect resin pots cost £19 each at Greenfingers

▶ Bleeding hearts are pretty, hardy perennials that are easy to care for and long flowering



WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

The lawn will need cutting in summer, but if you use bark chippings the kids' play area will be maintenance-free. For borders, choose long-flowering, care-free perennials, such as yarrow, bleeding heart and black-eyed Susan.

HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

This garden shouldn't be expensive to create or maintain, as long as you keep the borders quite narrow. You can make them seem deeper, though, by planting evergreen climbers, such as *Clematis armandii*.

The tapering garden

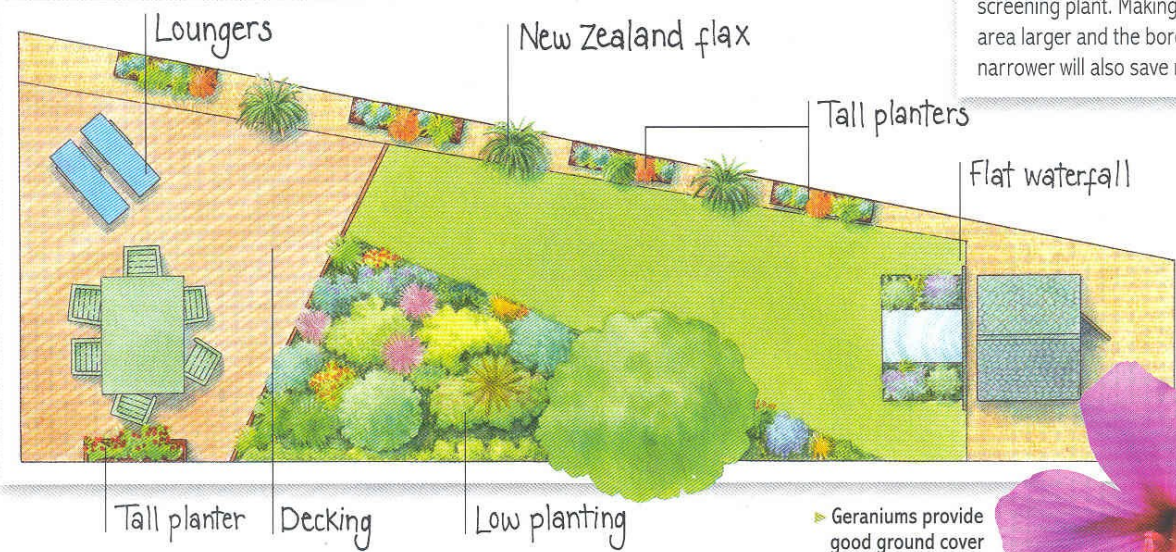
This design uses strong diagonals across the garden to trick the eye. The main border comes into the middle of the garden, while the lawn widens as the garden narrows, balancing the tapered shape. The shed hides behind a water feature at the far end, making the narrowest part of the garden a useful spot.

WILL IT TAKE MUCH LOOKING AFTER?

In the summer the lawn will need cutting once a week and the plants in the borders will need regular watering. Put down a weed-suppressing membrane (from garden centres) to cut down on the amount of weeding, then plant the border with ground cover plants, such as geraniums or catmint.

HOW CAN I CUT COSTS?

Replace the pots with tall plants set into the ground – bamboo would be a good choice because it's evergreen and makes a good screening plant. Making the lawn area larger and the border narrower will also save money. 🏡

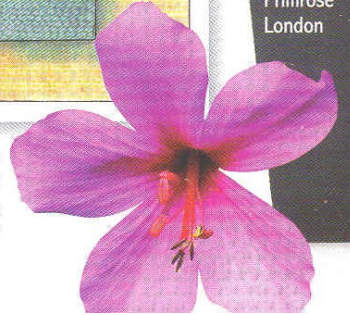


Tall planter

Decking

Low planting

▶ Geraniums provide good ground cover and colour through the summer



Use tall pots planted with grasses for an eye-catching display. Pot, from £24.95 for H48cm, Primrose London

🏡 For where to buy items in this feature, see page 201