



Is your plot overlooked too? Find smart solutions on p50

BEFORE

The garden was tired with unsightly fencing and paving

Potato vine

GARDEN makeover

FEATURE: GAP PHOTOS/KIRSTY MCNEIL-O'CONNOR; PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS/ANNA OMIOTEK-TOTT; GARDEN DESIGN: EARTH DESIGNS

“Now our garden is a second living room”

It took just 17 days to transform Jeni and Ned Miles’ overlooked London plot into an easy-care ENTERTAINING AREA

GARDEN MAKEOVER

THE SPACE was divided into sections made up of decking, paving and planting beds on a single level.

Portuguese laurel

Lady's mantle

A CORTEN STEEL wall within a planting bed divides the decked area from the rear of the garden and screens a big storage box used for garden essentials.



With a mishmash of paving and artificial grass, the plot lacked unity

When Jeni and Ned Miles started looking into adding pleached trees or a pergola to their overlooked plot, little did they know they'd end up with a fully redesigned garden. Wanting to create a more secluded sanctuary to socialise with friends, the couple turned to garden designer Katrina Kieffer-Wells of Earth Designs (earthdesigns.co.uk). "Our garden was overlooked by flats, so we simply wanted to add more privacy," says Jeni.

Aside from the lack of seclusion, the couple were pretty happy with the garden that they inherited with the three-storey Victorian property they'd moved into five years previously. "It had been well looked after by the previous owners," explains Jeni. "And while the paving area at the back of the house had seen better days and the fencing was very old and in need of some love, there were lots of lovely foliage plants and a big strip of artificial grass."

Seeking advice for a quick fix to block the view from the surrounding flats, the couple started looking for a designer who could help create a more private space. "We found Earth Designs on Instagram," says Jeni. "They had done a lot of work around north London and seemed to have expertise with similar plots."

CHANGE OF PLAN

Katrina was quick to see the potential of the compact plot. "The clients had extensively renovated the interior of their Victorian property and it was clear that the split-level garden had been landscaped in the past but, in comparison to the house, felt dated and uninspired," she says. "The space was overlooked from various angles and the awkward layout and multiple levels made it seem disjointed and difficult to use."

The couple saw the sense in making full use of their outside space. "Katrina noticed the old, worn paving stones in our patio and the slightly dangerous platform leading out from the back door to the garden, and suggested a few

changes that would not only increase the useability of our garden but be a sound investment for the property too," says Jeni.

A Pinterest board was born and soon there was no turning back. "We took the plunge and ended up doing a lot more than we had anticipated!" Jeni adds.

The design went through a couple of changes before it was all agreed. "We wanted something bright but



BEFORE

neutral,” explains Jeni. “Katrina’s original design sketch included lots of neon planters, but we settled on keeping the colours natural and earthy. In part, we wanted to make sure the garden can easily be modified by future owners to their own tastes.”

ACCESS ALL AREAS

With the agreed design in place, the build could begin. But entry to the site for the team wasn’t easy. “We have no side access at all due to being mid-terrace, and fairly narrow doorways towards the back of the house,” says Jeni. “It meant the excavation was quite cumbersome as each bag had to be brought through the entirety of the house.”



Ned and Jeni can now sit back and relax in their easy-care garden

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

North London

THE LOOK

Modern courtyard garden

SITE

Size 7 x 5m Faces South east

Soil London Clay

OUR BUDGET

Clearance & preparation **£1,522**

Decking & cladding for fence **£3,973**

Paving **£5,062** Corten steel wall **£999**

Plants **£2,863** Lighting **£1,918**

TOTAL:

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Clearance & preparation **3 days**

Decking & fence cladding **3 days**

Paving **7 days**

Installing Corten steel wall **1 day**

Planting **2 days**

Lighting **1 day**

TOTAL:

The idea was to turn the plot into an outdoor living room, with some storage and the facility to entertain large gatherings comfortably and with style. The garden is now divided into zones using a variety of materials that add texture and interest. A mid-height Corten steel wall in rusty hues splits the garden into two distinct halves, with an outdoor lounge with corner sofa, coffee table, firepit and barbecue in one paved section and a bistro table and chairs in the other decked area. “Initially Katrina wanted to install two Corten steel walls, but we wanted to save money by only having one,” says Jeni. “In hindsight, this was a great idea because you can better see the sofa area from the kitchen, rather than half the garden being hidden from view.”

NATURAL BEAUTY

The modern pale grey palette is warmed with wood-clad fencing and Corten steel planters that echo the tones of the feature wall. To accentuate these earthy tones, zesty green foliage, including the arching fronds of a graceful tree fern, provides a bright contrast. “We asked Earth Designs to save as many plants as possible when updating the garden,” says Jeni, “and to make the planting reasonably low maintenance. We have dreams of one day being proper gardeners but for now it involves mainly watering existing plants and pulling out weeds! The garden is pretty self-sufficient – the main thing we have to do is trim the pleached trees regularly.”

The trees are lovely silver-leaved evergreens Ebbing’s silverberry. And while they do their job of screening the garden to offer the couple the privacy they wanted, they also add fragrant white flowers in autumn and a feast of attractive red fruit for hungry birds in spring. “We love being nestled in the egg chair under our pleached trees,” says Jeni. “It’s our favourite spot because it gets sunshine for the majority of the day and faces away from our neighbour’s windows, so you feel a bit more at one with nature and away from the city.”

ROOM TO RELAX

“The garden is a second living room for us now, especially since we found our sofa,” Jeni says. “The additional lighting allows us to sit out there until late in the evenings. And we’ve had bifold doors installed in the back room, so now the garden feels like a continuation of the house.”

A herb bed is packed with thyme, sage, rosemary, chives and fennel, as well as a bay tree, and cooking outside on the barbecue is a regular treat for Jeni and Ned. “We love planning a mouthwatering veggie barbecue. We marinate tofu and seitan [a vegan protein] and serve it with grilled vegetables, picking herbs directly from our garden,” continues Jeni.

“It’s great to be able to sit on our garden sofa with the firepit nearby, chatting away with friends. We held a party here for about 40 of my master’s degree classmates who were all visiting London from dozens of countries. I like to think our garden helped them really see London living at its finest!”



SAGE SPILLS from the herb bed onto the decking.



A DECKED AREA is the perfect spot for a table for two.

SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

- ✓ **ADD PURPLE SAGE** and statuesque fennel to herb beds, and let your chives flower, for a pretty display.
- ✓ **MAKE YOUR GARDEN A MORE INTERESTING SHAPE** with a simple mid-height wall.
- ✓ **PLANT AN ALCHEMILLA MOLLIS** – we’d forgotten how gorgeous it is, and it’s a great cut flower too!

GARDEN MAKEOVER

Fancy a cosy cocoon chair? Turn to p54

TIMBER CLADDING transforms the tired fencing and along with sawn sandstone paving creates a stylish chillout zone.



ALCHEMILLA IS perfect for edging paths and decks, filling beds with a frothy haze of yellow flowers June to September.



- 1 Rive Droite Bistro Set, **£120** garden.trading.co.uk
- 2 Cast Iron Disc Fire Pit, **£169.99** crocus.co.uk
- 3 Alchemilla mollis, **£4.95/9cm pot** sarahraven.com
- 4 Nomad Pouff, **£115** bombayduck.com
- 5 Kettler Elba Low Corner Set, **£1,455** midlands-cane-furniture.co.uk

Get the look!



PLEACHED EBBINGE'S silverberry trees along the boundary create a privacy screen.