

# A garden of two personalities

Transforming a Leigh-on-Sea plot into a shared sanctuary

PHOTOS: Better Perspective



How the Leigh-on-Sea garden looked originally

## A GARDEN WITH TWO VISIONS

When Sandy and David Hemmings set out to redesign the garden of their Leigh-on-Sea home, they knew they were facing an unusual challenge. Both loved the outdoors, but each gravitated toward different aesthetics and had different ambitions for how the garden should function. Sandy dreamed of a productive space filled with fruit, vegetables, and flowers for cutting, while David envisioned a relaxed, sociable environment with a bar, comfortable seating and room to entertain.

Their existing garden felt tired and disconnected, lacking both structure and personality. What they needed was a design that could reconcile two sets of tastes and create harmony between productivity and leisure.

ED Gardens, the Essex-based design-and-build team, stepped in with a thoughtful plan that balanced both their visions while bringing new energy and cohesion to the space. >





An overhead shot of the transformed space

## DESIGNING A SHARED LANDSCAPE

The brief given was clear: the redesign needed to reflect two lifestyles, offer visual interest throughout the space, and provide zones for the varied ways Sandy and David hoped to use their garden. Privacy was also a priority, particularly along the left-hand boundary, and the couple wanted materials that were both durable and beautiful.

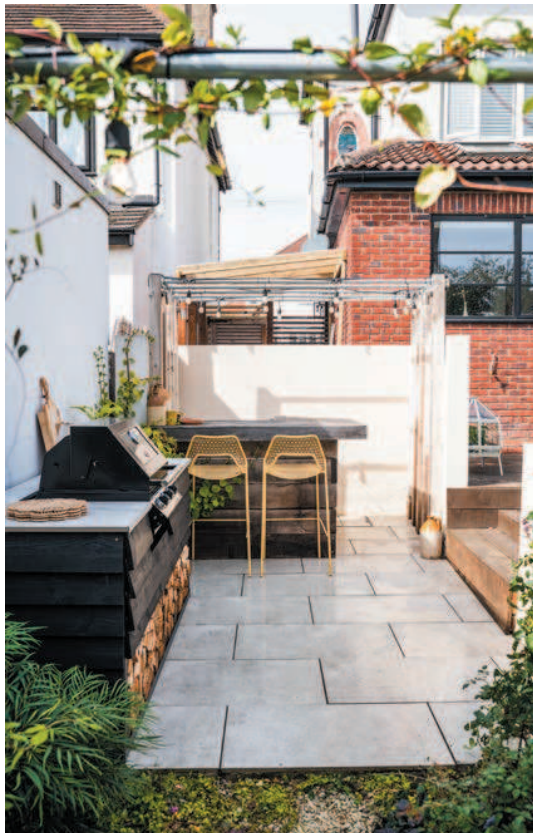
To achieve this, designer Katrina Kieffer-Wells created a garden composed of interlocking areas, each with its own purpose yet visually connected through repeated materials, smart planting, and structural elements. The result was a layout that felt natural and unforced, allowing Sandy and David to enjoy their individual interests without feeling divided.

## A STYLISH, PRACTICAL OUTDOOR KITCHEN AND BAR

Since entertaining was a major priority for David, the existing bin storage area was cleverly repurposed into a fully functional bar and outdoor kitchen. This new hub became one of the garden's most distinctive features.

A timber and scaffold-pole pergola was constructed above, offering shade and atmosphere, while beneath it a fresh porcelain-tiled patio created a clean, durable surface perfect for heavy entertaining use. The porcelain paving, supplied by London Stone, gave the area a refined, contemporary look while remaining highly practical – resistant to staining, frost and everyday wear.

To complete the space, a pair of sleek bar chairs from Wayfair UK were added. These provided a comfortable spot for enjoying a drink while enhancing the bar's modern, relaxed character. The combination of materials – timber, metal, porcelain, and soft natural textures – gave the kitchen area the sense of being a true outdoor room.



The outdoor kitchen and bar



The raised terrace by the back door

## A RAISED TERRACE WITH PERSONALITY

Directly outside the back door, a raised platform was created, designed to bridge the house and garden more effectively. This area was laid with wood-effect porcelain planks, once again from London Stone, which were chosen for their realistic texture and long-lasting finish. Their warm, natural look softened the transition from indoor flooring to the outdoors while offering all the resilience of porcelain.

Alongside this terrace, a bespoke decking bench with integrated storage was built, giving Sandy and David a practical spot to stash cushions, tools, or other items while also boosting the seating capacity for gatherings.

A second timber pergola with scaffold-pole crossbeams introduced dappled shade and an inviting sense of enclosure. This structure also played a role in the privacy strategy, offering screening from neighbouring properties and creating a cosy nook that felt tucked away despite its proximity to the house.

## A NATURAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE GARDEN

One of the key achievements of the redesign was the creation of a sense of journey. So a stepping-stone path leading from the bar area down the right-hand side of the garden was introduced. The slabs used for the path were taken from the original patio and pathway, keeping waste to a minimum and giving the new space a subtle link to its past.

Three timber arches were constructed along the route. These provided vertical interest and helped define the passage from one garden 'room' to the next. As they age, climbing plants will eventually soften the timber and create a leafy tunnel – a long-term feature that will evolve with the garden.



The stepping stone path through the garden



Galvanised steel cattle troughs provide more growing space



Raised beds using railway sleepers



The lower section of the garden is focused on growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers

## A PRODUCTIVE LOWER GARDEN FOR GROWING

Sandy's wish for a thriving grow-your-own space was more than met. The lower section of the garden was reimagined as a productive, beautiful area focused on fruit, vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

A generous lawn occupied the left-hand side, offering a soft, open contrast to the structural planting around it. Against the rendered wall, three railway-sleeper raised beds were installed. These solid, architectural planters gave plenty of depth for growing and added rustic warmth.

In front of the raised beds, long galvanised-steel cattle troughs provided even more growing capacity. Their industrial finish introduced a modern agricultural aesthetic that suited Sandy's preference for a working garden. A greenhouse was positioned at the rear of the lawn along the left boundary. It became a focal point as well as a functional structure, offering space for seed-starting, overwintering tender plants, and experimenting with more adventurous crops.

## PLANTING FOR PRIVACY AND BEAUTY

Privacy had been one of the Hemmings' key concerns. The houses beyond the left boundary felt imposing, particularly in winter when surrounding trees lost their foliage. This was addressed with the installation of three standard blossom trees placed strategically along the boundary. These added height without overwhelming the space and brought spectacular seasonal interest.

Their spring blooms, summer foliage, and autumn colour ensured they always offered something to enjoy.

Around the rear patio, planting beds were refreshed and expanded.

A Corten-steel water bowl introduced a sculptural touch, its rich rusted tones contrasting beautifully with surrounding greenery. The reflective surface of the water added calmness and a sense of movement.

## A COHESIVE GARDEN FOR TWO LIFESTYLES

By the time the project was completed, Sandy and David had a garden that honoured both of their personalities. It offered structure without rigidity, softness without chaos, and practicality without compromising style.

The work of ED Gardens successfully united a space for socialising with a space for growing, a place for peaceful retreat with a place for lively entertaining.

Most importantly, it created a garden that felt truly theirs – thoughtful, balanced, and full of potential as it continues to mature.

If you'd like a garden that bridges different tastes or lifestyles, this project proves how creative design and clever material choices can bring harmony to the most divided wish lists. ●

**ED Gardens, a garden design and build family business established for 25 years, covers London and Essex. Helping you with your outdoor space from concept to completion, [edgardens.co.uk](http://edgardens.co.uk)**