

GRAND DESIGNS



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JERRY HANFURTH/HARPER GARDEN IMAGES

Secluded space

After remodelling her Victorian terrace in west London, Anita Sansford wanted something more attractive to look out on than the messy garden she had inherited. 'The client's main brief was that the space needed to be both flexible and private,' says designer Philip Nixon. 'And although Anita likes plants, she didn't want to be spending hours looking after the garden.'

To solve the privacy issues, Philip planted five hornbeams across the bottom of the garden to shield Anita's house from her neighbours at the rear of her property, while high fencing in oiled iroko makes it feel more like a secluded courtyard. A bespoke bench, also in iroko, provides a permanent seating solution, and the middle area of the garden has been left fairly open so there's plenty of room for a table and chairs if Anita feels like doing some alfresco entertaining.

To help break up the space, the dark grey sandstone is mixed with rows of flint gravel, while a stainless-steel water column provides a subtle focal point. In terms of planting, Philip opted for a mix of styles, from broadleaf species to spiky, architectural plants to provide added interest and texture. Stone containers from Marston & Langer lined up along one edge of the garden are planted with pennisetum (ornamental grasses).

'There's very little required in terms of maintenance,' says Philip. 'The iroko will need staining every two to three years, and the planting has to be cut back slightly in winter, but apart from that it should look after itself.' And Anita doesn't even need a watering can: for hot summer days, there's an automatic irrigation system that can be programmed to water the plants as many times as needed.

winters down to -20°C. Others to consider include the dwarf fan palm, *Chamaerops humilis*, and *Trachycarpus wagnerianus*.

Although many plants can be grown in well-prepared soil, some are perfect in containers, making them ideal for really tiny gardens. Choose pots that suit the plant, your style of garden or hard landscaping materials. Black or white terrazzo, galvanised steel in geometric shapes or glazed terracotta suit sleek, modern spaces. If you only have a balcony and need a lightweight

container, try one of many on the market made from fibreglass.

Low-maintenance doesn't mean you can forget about plants altogether, and even the most drought-tolerant specimen will need to be watered occasionally. Make life easier by setting up an automatic watering system with a timer fitted to an outdoor tap.

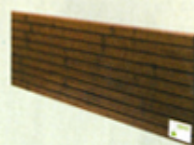
Ask the experts

If you've never done it before, designing a garden from scratch can be difficult. It is often best to

clockwise from left

The walls and bespoke bench are crafted from iroko wood, which will only need staining every two to three years; the greenery is watered by an automatic irrigation system, so all Anita has to do is give the plants a trim in winter; the water feature works at the flick of a switch

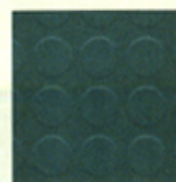
Innovative surfaces



Bamboo decking
£23.57 per sqm, Smeeth



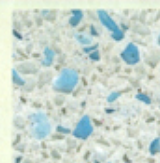
Fake grass from
£32.50 per sqm,
Forever Green Lawns



Studded rubber flooring
£16 per linear m, Polymax



Textured concrete
from £150 per sqm,
Concrete Blond



Resillica recycled glass
£470 per linear m, Eight Inch

