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Planting areas are neatly defined in this stylish London garden, page 74

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Helleborus orientalis subsp. *abchasicus* by Jason Ingram

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Designer Adolfo Harrison has mixed judicious planting and discreet visual cues to create a mellow fusion of indoor and outdoor space in a west London garden

An insider's view

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS RICHARD BLOOM

Below left All the elements of the garden take their proportions from the dimensions of the building and the stone slabs inside the house. The planting areas are neatly defined by the stone path running down the length of the garden, a low water feature and a boardwalk leading to a hidden outdoor dining room.

Below right Four huge, glass panels slide across the back of the house, merging the indoor and outdoor spaces. Blue Bateig limestone has been used to pave both house and garden, and the impressive internal green wall creates a direct visual link with the wisteria and hydrangeas that scramble up the external trellis.



IN BRIEF

What Private courtyard garden
Where West London
Size 70 square metres
Soil Poor-quality loam,
lightly improved
Climate Temperate
Hardiness zone USDA 9



It wasn't until they had completed a sleek, contemporary refurbishment of their house in Shepherd's Bush that Carla Pont and Will Slater turned their attention to the garden. "Maybe that wasn't the ideal working order, but we needed a staged approach to find out how we felt about it," says Carla.

Having installed a double-height atrium and a wall of sliding glass panels across the back of the building, both the limitations and the possibilities of their tiny outdoor space were clearly apparent. "It reminded me of Barcelona, where I grew up," says Carla. "I wanted to build on that sense of a space hidden within the city but still part of it, where nature is taking over the architecture but there is still room to live your life outside."

With no practical gardening experience of her own, Carla asked designer Adolfo Harrison to help turn her ideas into reality. "The concept of the Barcelona courtyard became our guiding principle and from that point the garden layout sorted itself out pretty quickly," says Adolfo. "The existing built elements dictated

the organisation of the space, and the stone floor slabs that we continued outside from the kitchen set the dimensions. Then it was just a matter of filling in with plants."

Clearly it wasn't quite that easy, although it was fortunate that the new side extension created a niche of decent proportions within the sunniest part of the garden that was perfect for al fresco eating. Adolfo enclosed this area with a western red cedar pergola that is rapidly disappearing under a scrambling mass of fragrant *Trachelospermum jasminoides*. With decking, wall cladding and inbuilt seating all in the same timber, this makes a comfortable outdoor dining area with space for a super-sized Big Green Egg barbecue. The illusion of a room outside is completed by a cantilevered bookshelf running around the walls, where Carla is amassing a collection of succulents in interesting pots.

The shelf takes its height from the sliding glass window panels, and the line continues through the trellis in the main garden. "We ran a horizontal frame of wires across the top of the trellis

Lighting a small garden

Outdoor lighting is an obvious way to extend the time you can spend in your garden. Get a qualified electrician to run armoured cables into position before the hard landscaping elements are finished.

Uplighters can emphasise the sculptural outline of specimen trees, as with the amelanchiers in this garden. Take a little time to adjust the angle of each beam for maximum impact.

Fully submersible light fittings allow you to enjoy the sight as well as the sound of a water feature after dark and can cast magical reflections.

Some lights become a sculptural feature in their own right. Carla and Will have a disc light on the back wall that looks like a minimalist ornament by day, but at night throws dramatic starburst rays across the brickwork.

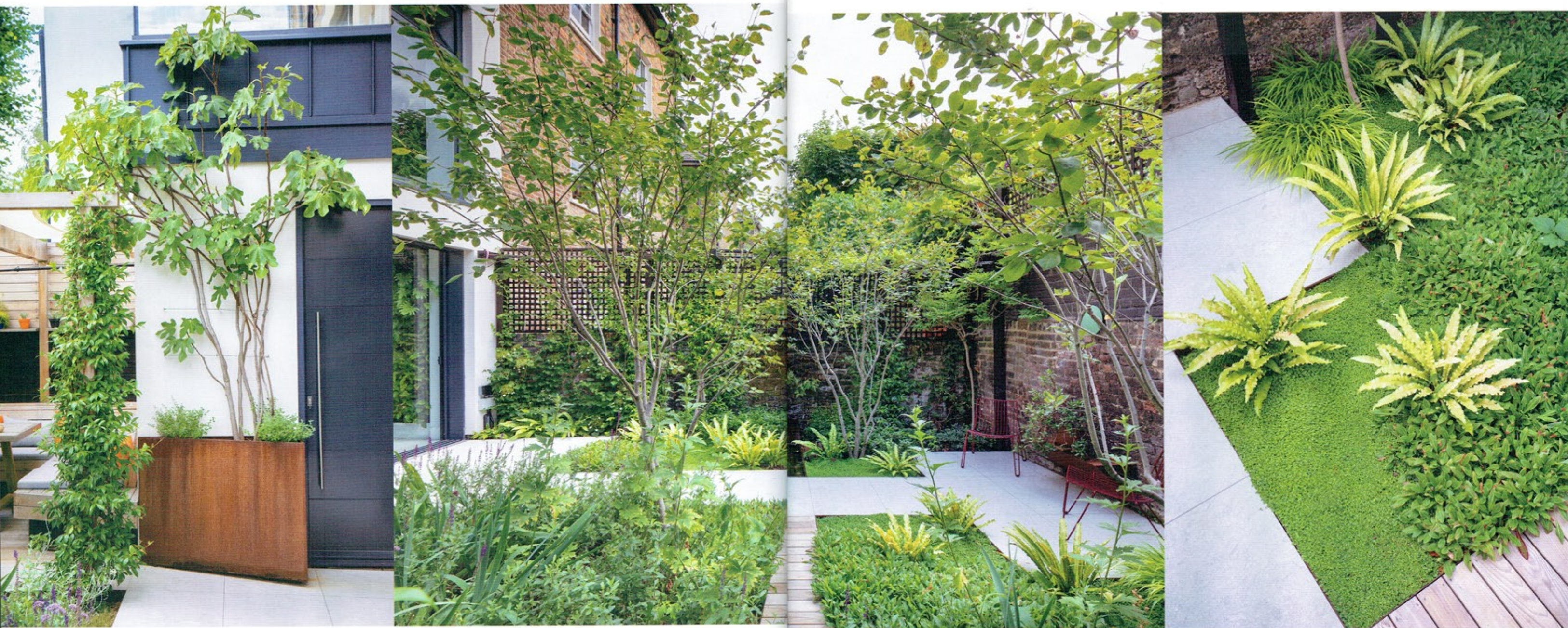
Statement lights, such as the giant, anglepoise-style, Lampe Gras light over the dining table, can inject a bit of fun into a setting.

LED strips are a flexible, low-voltage option. Here a strip runs along the underside of the floating shelf in the dining area. They can be also used to highlight steps, raised beds or built-in seating.

Below left A pruned fig tree in a wedge-shaped Corten steel planter makes optimum use of the narrow space leading past a distinctly glamorous shed within the new extension to the outdoor dining room.

Below centre Looking across the garden from the outdoor dining area, three multi-stemmed amelanchiers frame a view of the water feature and a seating area while concealing the adjacent houses.

Below right The view of the garden from the bedroom above reveals that the undulating ribbons of planting, including hart's tongue ferns and *Soleirolia soleirolia*.



▷ panels and are gradually training wisteria along them, which looks amazing when the wisteria is in flower,” says Adolfo. “The idea is to keep your gaze within the garden and distract from the sight of overlooking buildings.”

In fact, the whole garden is full of visual distractions. On the shady side, a water feature sends ripples down a washboard of Corten steel into a shallow, rectangular pool filled with the reflections of ferns growing out of the perimeter wall. “They are one of the best features in the garden but they sprouted naturally from the worn brickwork because it was so damp,” says Adolfo. “The neighbours’ shed dripped on to that wall, keeping it saturated, but when the shed was knocked down the ferns started to die, so we installed a drip irrigation pipe along the top of the wall to recreate those favourable conditions.”

Four main beds hold the rest of the planting, which looks equally serendipitous but was carefully orchestrated. Three multi-stemmed *Amelanchier x grandiflora* ‘Ballerina’ have a year-round presence and are gently uplit after dark. The shady areas are filled with hart’s

tongue ferns, *Sarcococca confusa*, *Persicaria affinis* ‘Superba’ and cushiony mounds of *Soleirolia soleirolii*. In the sunny areas, masses of *Aconitum carmichaelii*, *Thymus* (Coccineus Group) ‘Purple Beauty’, *Salvia nemorosa* ‘Caradonna’ and the tawny orange *Iris* ‘Cable Car’ are underplanted with soft-blue *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* Caerulea Group and *Muscari armeniacum* for an early wash of colour.

The planting continues inside the house in the form of an impressive green wall running up one side of the atrium. “It’s a really good system with pots that slot into trays, so if any plant fails you can just lift it out and insert a new one,” says Carla. “I get a ladder out and take care of it myself, and we both love pottering outside as well. This garden has really made the house. It’s my favourite place to be.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Adolfo’s work at adolfoharrison.com

Below left With clever use of space, Adolfo has created a garden with strong visual impact to complement the stylish refurbishment of the house. The dining area is already largely hidden from sight, but as the *Trachelospermum jasminoides* grows up to cover even more of the pergola structure, that sense of seclusion will only increase.

Below right The mix of old and new was a key part of the Barcelona aesthetic. Rather than render the old walls for a sleek, modern finish, Adolfo emphasised the contrast between worn brickwork, pristine paving and contemporary trellis to screen out neighbouring buildings.

