

WILD AT HEART

WINNER
 Finalist and Winner:
 'Residential
 Landscaping
 Design Award 2016'



PROJECT DETAILS

Project value
£30k

Build time
2 months

Size of project
170m²

DAVID KEEGAN GARDEN DESIGN

Clever use of space transforms a small city garden in Salford into an award-winning and picture-perfect haven for insect life

The fundamental design principle behind this project, and the brief set by the client, was for a low maintenance space that was more outward looking and European in its aesthetic than a traditional English garden. It was also a requirement that the design for the garden displayed a strong architectural context, as well as providing a haven for insect life that could coexist in harmony with humans – quite a lot to expect from what is a very small space.

Design

A big part of David's vision was to create a connection between the inside and outside space, and generate a sense of being immersed in the garden, even when seated inside. In carrying this out, he deliberately decided not to follow the fashion of extending the inside out, and instead created a separate nature space that provided a complementary flow between the two, rather than a continuous connection. David wanted the garden to connect to all the senses and to be a 'picture' whatever the weather and time of year, whilst equally needing it to fill and flow with the seasons.

As the garden was very small, the primary challenge was to try and include everything the client wanted without compromising or swamping the space. For example, the hidden raised beds came about following a conversation David had with the client where it became evident they would be used to grow a small selection of seasonal salad leaves and spinach – plants that would cope with the reduced light levels of raised beds but equally, hidden away, wouldn't look unsightly when not in use. By incorporating the raised beds behind a screen, David was able to achieve this without compromising the overall aesthetic balance of the garden.

Similarly, the wood store is both practical as a space to season wood for a wood burning stove, but is also aesthetically complementary to the overall scheme. The green walls allowed David to create depth and use colour and planting to draw the eye beyond the sculptural screens, but in a space-controlled way that could also be easily maintained. Likewise, the bug houses were visually complementary as well as being useful habitats for wildlife.

The use of a cobble base was a deliberate move to get away from the usual grassed lawn area, requiring less maintenance and therefore causing less environmental pressure. It also played to the sculptural dimensions of the design, as well as lending texture and contrasting foils to the interplanting, the →



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- 1 View across central terrace with Western Red Cedar sculpture panels
- 2 Bespoke log store filled with Cherry wood prunings from a tree in the garden
- 3 White butterfly adds to a long list of insects making use of the garden's rich nectar store



effects of which will increase as planting matures and develops. In this way, the small space provides the calming retreat that the client wanted, as well as embracing and supporting the natural environment in a holistic and balanced manner.

Planting

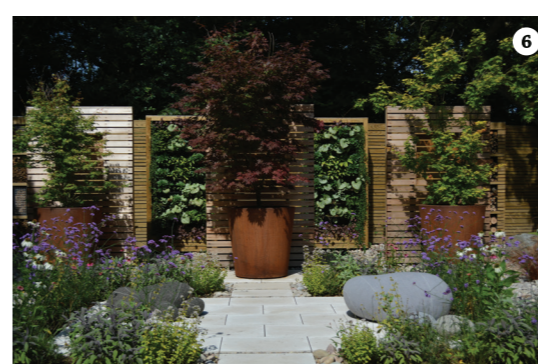
The wildlife-friendly planting included the new hybrid *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop' – a lower growing and more compact variety than the standard *Verbena bonariensis*, which can tend to get overly large and straggly in a small space. This was combined with *Salvia officinalis* 'Purpurascens' and *Echinacea purpurea* 'White Swan', plus another, somewhat new *Echinacea purpurea* hybrid, 'Kim's Knee High' – a shorter and more compact variety of *Echinacea*, with an almost metallic sheen to the petals. *Origanum vulgare*, with its soft lime green foliage and pale pinkish-white flowers, and creeping lemon thymes, were then planted to add contrast. David also chose the compact *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead', completing the haven of colour and scent.

The effect of this style of planting is to create layers of colour and contrast from the ground up to just over 60cm – about the right height for the size of the space, as it provides a good picture without overwhelming the senses of the viewer. Cool colours in the lower planting layer act as a perfect foil for stronger colours in the top layer.

Planting to the cobbled areas was more muted, with silver greys and bronzes providing a framework for the central zone. The scheme included such gems as *Eryngium giganteum* 'Miss Wilmott's Ghost', contrasted with the bronze panicles of *Carex buchananii* 'Red Rooster', which picked up the tones of the Corten pots, cobbles and boulders. The striking panicles and flower stems of *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', green with flowering stems of soft buff, continue the evolving sense of drama and contrast in the garden.

The end result when you are seated inside the house and looking out on the garden is that it acts as a calming backdrop and picture. When you sit in the garden, on the other hand, you are totally immersed, and can escape the connection and confines of the house. In this way, the garden becomes a discrete, but complementary, separate space. While the two spaces coexist and connect, they both offer very different moods and, consequentially, very different emotional responses.

On David's summer visit to the garden in the first year, he was delighted to find it brimming with colour, texture and wildlife.



BEFORE/DURING

- 1 Summer colour stone effect cushions, with Corten pots in background
- 2 View from back of garden towards seating area outside the house's bi-fold doors
- 3 Bumble bee collects nectar from *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop' inflorescence
- 4 Hidden planters to rear of sculpture panels provide the perfect place to grow some salad leaves and other semi-shade loving edibles
- 5 Even dragonflies have turned up to feed on the nectar-rich plants
- 6 Green walls draw the eye past the Corten Pots and Cedar panels and into the trees beyond, lending a sense of depth to a shallow garden
- 7 Acers planted in the Corten pots lend exquisite colour, warmth and seasonal interest
- 8 Bare bones, the framework of a garden mid-construction
- 9 The garden as seen on my first visit

ABOUT DAVID KEEGAN GARDEN DESIGN

David Keegan is an award-winning garden designer specialising in



medium to large scale domestic and commercial projects. His designs set out to strengthen the connection between people and place through harmonious use of plants and materials.

www.davidkeegangardensdesignandlandscapingconsultancy.co.uk

REFERENCES

Garden design and planting
David Keegan Garden Design
 David Keegan, assisted by Natalie Rutter
www.davidkeegangardensdesignandlandscapingconsultancy.co.uk

Hard landscaping
Spruce Landscapes
 Kris Kennedy, assisted by Shaun Hattersley and Bradley Campbell
www.sprucelandscape.co.uk

Timber supplies (American yellow pine and western red cedar)
The Manchester Deck Company Ltd
 Chris Lowe
www.manchesterdeck.co.uk

Bespoke screens, raised beds, living walls wood store and bug house
Spruce Landscapes
 Kris Kennedy
www.sprucelandscape.co.uk

Green wall components
Tree Box Easi Green Wall
www.treebox.co.uk

Plants
Boot & Co Nurseries
www.boot.nl/en

Furniture
Bespoke order from the Skyline range
 Made in Belgium, supplied by DK Garden Design on behalf of Skyline
www.sky-linedesign.co.uk

Corten steel pots
The Pot Company
www.thepotco.com

Stone effect cushions
Custom made Livingstone cushions
 Designed and manufactured by Stéphanie Marin in Nice, France
www.smarin.net/en/

Portuguese bush hammered stone
Trade Price Stone Ltd
www.tradepricestoneitd.co.uk

Scottish river cobble
JH Mayor Timber and Fencing Specialists
www.jhmayor.com

Large boulders
Reclaimed