



1
CERAMIC PANELS
 create a feature wall that reflects the evening light.

GOOD IDEA
 Planting an evergreen, low-maintenance yew hedge offers year-round privacy

4
CLEVER SEATING
 arrangements allow Sandra and David to follow the sun around the garden.

3
THE LUSH LAWN
 helps to separate the garden into clear zones.

2
LILACS, MAUVES
 and blues give a sophisticated feel.

SUNNY RETREAT
 Modern fencing and subtle planting combine to create a chic, sun lover's paradise

*Cow parsley
 Ravenswing*

Agastache

Campanula

EXTREME
Makeover

“We now enjoy the sunshine all day long”

Sandra and David Hayes' north-facing plot was transformed from a bare, shady patch into a **LIGHT-FILLED SOCIABLE GARDEN**



THE GARDEN OFFERS
 a bright outdoor living space despite being north facing.

How we follow the sun



FIRST THING

ENJOYING BREAKFAST “We use the area directly outside the house for breakfast and morning coffee as the sun is coming up then,” says Sandra. “We also cook on the barbecue in that area as it's in the shade by the afternoon.”



MIDDAY

DINING AND LOUNGING AT LUNCHTIME “The main patio is used for when we have friends round for an alfresco lunch, and for sunbathing during the afternoon.”



EVENING

RELAXING AS THE SUN SETS “When we want to chill out after a day at work, this corner area is the perfect place for us to sit back, read, chat and catch the last of the day's sun.”

FEATURE AND PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS; DESIGN: CUBE1994.COM

BEFORE



Sandra and David's modern suburban garden was dull and uninviting.

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

"Our modern detached house in Chelmsford, Essex, has an easy-to-manage garden with different paved areas for catching the sun, along with various clipped hedges for privacy."

THE LOOK

Modern and sophisticated.

SITE & SOIL

Size 25 x 11m narrowing to 16 x 5m

Faces North

Soil Combination made up of equal parts clay, silt and sand

OUR BUDGET

Patio areas including paths **£19,000**

Designer wall **£3,000**

Lighting **£3,800**

Soil conditioning **£1,700**

Hedging & trees **£14,000**

Plants **£4,700**

TOTAL: £46,200

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Design process **3 weeks**

Building and planting **5 weeks**

TOTAL: 8 WEEKS

CHIC CONTRAST

The metallic grey dining set in a simple and modern shape goes perfectly with the feature wall

SILVER ASTELIAS

look faintly metallic, complementing the bronze pots.



EASY TO TRIM uniform box hedges frame the raised patio area.

Focus lighting

Lighting helps the patio areas come alive as the sun sets, with a mix of stainless steel floor lighting (below left), powder coated steel lights (centre) and 'eyelid' hood lights (below).



That's clever!

READER GARDEN

Hornbeam trees

PLEACHED TREES

have been carefully trained along a framework.



Campanula

Cow parsley
Ravenswing

A MIX OF HEIGHTS and foliage in delicate blues and shades of purple offers year-round interest.

When Sandra and David moved into their new-build townhouse in 2002, the garden was very different to the one they enjoy today. "It consisted of an area of decking, a couple of flower beds with some small trees and shrubs, and a small area of patio around the edge of the garden. The rest was muddy, patchy grass," says Sandra.

The garden is a good size, but being north-facing the sun moves across the garden, creating different full sun and shaded areas throughout the day. There are also walls on two sides that screen out even more sun. "We put up with it for years, then one day we went out to look for some new garden furniture and decided it was time to redesign the whole lot!" says Sandra. Although the couple enjoy doing a spot of gardening they knew it was a big task and decided to get professional help.

"Our main concern was that we wanted to be able to enjoy the sun throughout the day, but the position of the decking meant we only had one space to sit and relax in," explains Sandra.

Having looked at a number of designers on the Internet and spoken to four or five, Sandra and David decided to employ garden designer Sean Butler from Cube 1994. He was given complete freedom, which allowed him to rip up everything and start with a blank canvas.

ADD PRIVACY

The design process, after the initial consultation, took three weeks and incorporated different lounging and dining spots around the garden to allow for when the sun moves around. "The design was everything we could have hoped for and more," says Sandra.

The first thing Sean and his team had to do was sort out the soil as it was poor quality and made plants difficult to grow. Soil conditioner was mixed into the existing soil to create a loam, which is made up of equal parts clay, silt and sand, and is perfect for growing plants and trees.

To add much-wanted privacy, a clipped yew hedge was planted between two of the high walls around the edge of the garden, and a set of three pleached hornbeam trees was added in

at the opposite end. Pleached trees have had their branches trained along a wooden or wire framework (see page 33 for more details.)

Sean's plans included creating three different zones where Sandra and David could choose to sit depending on where the sun was. What was once the decked area was removed and the surface built up and laid with modern pavers. It's now a large, comfortable spot with a dining table and chairs ready for holding the dinner parties Sandra and David enjoy. Alongside this is enough space for two sun loungers.

OPT FOR METALLIC SHADES

The bronze colour feature wall acts as a stylish backdrop and sets the scene for eating al fresco on summer evenings. The panels, called DesignClad by London Stone, are ceramic panels that are stuck to the brick wall with special exterior-use high-stick adhesive. "We chose these to break up the expanse of wall and give a more modern feel to the garden,"

says Sandra. "We love how dramatic the change is and how the lights reflect off them in the evening."

Other zones include one below the yew hedge, which is a paved square with a comfy L-shaped lounge, while just outside the back of the house is a patio big enough to fit an informal set of table and chairs.

The planting style that Sean chose has a sophisticated and modern theme, using plants with a colour palette of lavender, purple, mauve, lilac and blue, along with evergreen shrubs to give year-round interest. The box hedges were clipped and shaped to contain and frame the flower beds, with the yew hedging used to soften the boundaries and brick walls and to create a privacy panel.

Among the highlights of the garden, along with the ceramic wall panels, are the oversized bronze pots that have been planted with dwarf evergreen silver astelias, which, with their leaves that look as though they've been dusted with

silver, create a stunning contrast. "The bronze pots were chosen to complement the colour of the wall tiles," explains Sandra. "I wanted a couple to add some height and structure. I then positioned more pots outside the conservatory to add some interest to the bistro patio area."

To highlight all the features when the sun goes down is stainless steel floor lighting, powder coated black steel lights in the flower beds and 'smoothie eyelid' lights on the steps. These lights have an 'eyelid' hood that hides the lamp from above when walking past.

Once the project was completed the couple were thrilled with the design and delighted that it hadn't made the garden feel any smaller. "The space is easy to look after, it's mainly just cutting and trimming every now and then," says Sandra. "It means we can spend our time sitting in the sunshine with friends. We love it!"