



“We’ve made small, beautiful”

ALEX AND EVA HUNT’S garden is packed with easy, stylish ideas



A MULTITASKING
free-standing parasol
offers shade and acts as a
screen from neighbours.



1

STAR JASMINE
is trained up and
across the slatted
feature panel
opposite the house
to soften the look.

THAT'S CLEVER!

*A circular lawn draws
the eye to the centre of
the garden and makes it
feel larger than it is*

3

A MIXTURE OF
grasses and
flowering perennials
fills the beds.

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

Chelmsford, Essex.

THE LOOK

Private suburban outdoor living space.

SITE & SOIL

Garden dimensions: 12.8 x 4.2m

Faces South Soil Clay

OUR BUDGET

Clearance, excavations & irrigation

£1,000

Paving **£7,000**

Turf **£650**

Plants **£3,000**

Water feature **£900**

Slatted panels **£1,000**

Lighting **£1,500**

Corten steel edging **£2,700**

TOTAL: £17,750

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Clearance, excavations & drainage

1 week

Fencing, paving & electrics **1 week**

Turf **1/2 day**

Planting **1 day**

Water feature installation **1 day**

TOTAL: 2 1/2 weeks

SUMMER-FLOWERING

Verbena bonariensis produces a haze of purple flowers at shoulder height so is perfect for the back of a flower bed. Height 1.8m x 30cm. £9.95/3 x 9cm plants sarahraven.com

A CURVED DESIGN

separates the patio into entertaining and relaxing areas.

2

THE STRAPPY, INKY

purple, grass-like leaves of black mondo grass contrast brilliantly with lush greenery. Bell-shaped, pale mauve flowers appear June-August. £6.99/9cm pot crocus.co.uk

BEFORE

TIP Lay natural sandstone paving for a clean, modern look

THE GARDEN was a blank canvas.



Eva Hunt got her dream garden in just over two weeks

When Alex and Eva Hunt moved into their new build house in 2017, they acquired a completely blank canvas of a garden, which is a daunting prospect, especially if you haven't gardened much before. "It consisted of a bit of grass with a high fence like a prison yard," says Alex. "It didn't feel welcoming at all and although we used it in the summer, we didn't particularly want to invite people round."

In addition to this, there were drainage issues and the lawn got heavily waterlogged. "We couldn't use the garden for days, or sometimes even weeks after it rained," Alex adds.

THE BIG IDEA

The couple, who were expecting a baby, decided to get some professional help. They approached Sean Butler of Cube 1994 (cube1994.com) in early spring of 2018. "Sean stood out as he really seemed to understand what we were looking for, and our budget. He offered both a creative and pragmatic attitude to the design, and his background in civil engineering was particularly useful for dealing with the drainage problem," says Alex.

Sean and his team started work in the spring of 2018. Their brief was to create a useable space, suitable for both a young child and entertaining, with low-maintenance planting. The first job was to create a land drain, a network of underground trenches with perforated piping, leading excess water away to an existing drain. With that done and the problem of the waterlogged lawn tackled, they

established raised flower beds, improving the existing thick, clay soil with composted green waste. To add a modern touch, on-trend Corten steel was used to edge the borders. But the waterlogged lawn wasn't the only big challenge, making a small space feel larger was the next. "We achieved this by creating a curved patio and lawn, which accentuate the feeling of space," says Sean.

Privacy was also a matter of concern to Alex and Eva, as they are overlooked from all sides, but they didn't want to make the existing fencing even higher. "Sean was really adaptable to our budget," says Alex. "Instead of blowing it on pleached trees to create a natural screen, he suggested that a few strategically placed trees and shrubs would soften the fence line."

The couple wanted a slatted screen for fencing, but kept the costs down by adding it sporadically around the garden rather than replacing the whole fence. "It stands out in areas where we want to see it, like around the patio and towards the back of the garden, where it also acts as a plant support," says Alex. "The planting in the flower beds helps to disguise the original fence, which is still there."



Star jasmine

EYE-CATCHING ASTRANTIA blooms from June to August. It loves a sunny spot. Height 90cm Spread 30cm. £7.99/9cm pot waitrosegarden.com

"The tree ferns give us the best view from the dining area"



THAT'S CLEVER

Mexican feather grass adds texture, colour and movement to the borders

SLATTED FENCE PANELS
are used as feature walls to stop the garden feeling too enclosed.

Tree fern

NEATLY SHAPED
lavender adds fragrant colour to the beds beneath the tree ferns. Trim after flowering. £3/1L plant homebase.co.uk

BRIGHT IDEA...

A bespoke water rill built into the fencing creates an ambient sound

◀ **TREE FERNS ARE DOTTED**
around the garden for subtle shade from the surrounding houses.



A FULLY ADJUSTABLE sun lounger that allows the backrest and centre part to be raised is a must-have! Try Wheels Sun Lounger, **£142.99** wayfair.co.uk

THE DINING TABLE has a built-in fire feature, so there's no need to take up space with a separate heater. For similar, try modafurnishings.co.uk **£2,595.**

"The dining and patio area is the perfect entertaining space"

The overall effect distracts from the housing around them while a small, child-friendly water feature creates a pleasant sound to help mask any surrounding noise.

Sean's team planted for year-round interest, with a mixture of evergreen trees, flowering perennials and grasses. Three handsome tree ferns give height and structure, with black mondo grass and ferns thriving in shadier spots, hardly needing any attention. Meanwhile, lavenders and verbena flower for a long time and do well in borders that get full afternoon sun. A climbing jasmine softens the back panel and offers a beautiful perfume when in flower.

A WELCOME SIGHT

The patio offers a great view of the rest of the garden, and Alex admits that they probably use the dining area all the more for the view they have of the planting.

Although neither of them wanted to spend much time tending to the plants in the garden, to their surprise, they have really enjoyed doing so. "I even mulched and protected the tree ferns for the winter," says Alex. "They were an investment and they're also my babies so I want to look after them!"

Their favourite part of the garden is the dining and patio area where they like to sit

around the modern gas firepit table. "We love to entertain and this table is perfect for that," says Alex. "It helps to extend a day spent outside, especially in the summer when the evenings, although lighter, are often a bit chillier. It feels like you are sitting around a campfire."



▲ A PORTABLE

kettle barbecue is an ideal choice for a small outdoor space. For similar, try Weber Master-Touch, **£279** johnlewis.com

THE FREE-STANDING

swing chair can easily be moved to enjoy sun or shade. For similar, try Charles Bentley Swing Chair, **£219.99** buydirect4u.co.uk

