

BEFORE

Dreary even in summer, the bare space needed an injection of style!

*Pimp up
your
shed too!
Turn to p100*

GARDEN
makeover

“Our compact plot looks fab all year round!”

Alan and Judy Travers' Essex garden has been redesigned **FOR ALL SEASONS** using Corten steel and stress-free plants

After living in Spain for a decade, Alan and Judy Travers moved back to the UK two years ago and bought a modern house with a small garden. The terraced townhouse in Sawbridgeworth, on the borders of Hertfordshire and Essex, suited their needs perfectly but the garden was small, bare and depressing. “When we moved in, the

garden was a very desolate space,” says Alan of the fenced-in plot that was predominantly laid to lawn with a paved path leading from the back gate to the patio next to the house.

The couple knew they wanted a gorgeous garden but didn't know where to begin to transform this empty square of land into a space they could enjoy. “We were aware

that we needed a professional to help us get the best out of such a small space,” says Alan. We had a set of basic parameters – we wanted a shed, a small area of grass, a patio and some flowers, and we wanted the garden to be low-maintenance. It was a very simple list but that was because we had no real idea what could be done with this blank, tiny area.”

GARDEN MAKEOVER

SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

- ✓ **LINE YOUR FENCE** with trellis and give your plot some on-trend geometric style.
- ✓ **USE A LONG PLANTER** to create a stylish water feature.
- ✓ **STACK LOGS UNDER BENCHES** for instant autumn texture.

Sedum roof

*Acer palmatum
dissectum 'Garnet'*

Clematis armandii

*Lavandula angustifolia
'Munstead'*

*Love this
Corten steel?
Turn to p28*

DESIGNER TO THE RESCUE!

Help arrived with local garden designers, Cube 1994 (cube1994.com), and Alan and Judy were quickly impressed by what could be squeezed into their compact plot. "The design process was simplicity itself," remembers Alan. "They asked questions about us, our lifestyle, our wants and needs and our budget, then produced a set of

plans. We pretty much accepted all of their ideas after a few visits and discussions!"

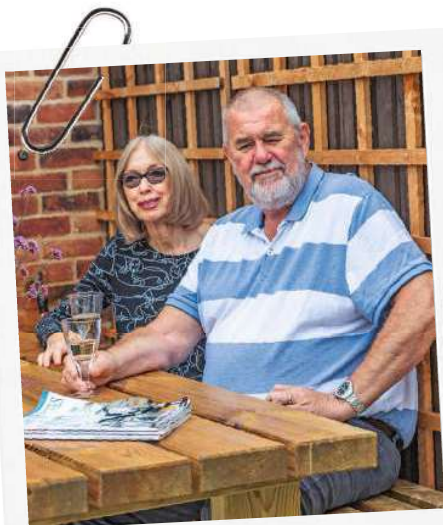
Sean Butler of Cube 1994 explains: "The clients wanted an easy-care garden which would suit their newbuild home but that was interesting on the eye with shape, structure and texture all year-round." But it wasn't just the size of the plot that placed constraints on the design. "The new homes

were built on the site of an old car park which meant the soil quality was very poor, filled with hardcore and rubble," Sean adds.

SMART SOLUTIONS

Before any construction could begin, the issue of the poor ground needed tackling. "We excavated around 45cm and added good quality topsoil in the planting areas,"

“Our new garden saved our sanity on long lockdown days”



Judy and Alan now have the perfect spot for a glass of wine in the sun

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

Sawbridgeworth, Essex

THE LOOK

Contemporary Corten

SITE

Size 10 x 6m Faces South east

Soil Poor, replaced with quality top-soil

OUR BUDGET

Clearance & excavation **£690**

Patio paving **£3,888**

Paving at side of house **£1,485**

Stepping stones **£346**

Artificial lawn **£1,512**

Planting **£1,822**

Soil improver **£467**

Corten screens **£2,400**

Corten pots & troughs **£1,710**

Lighting **£1,425**

Bespoke seating **£1,862**

Shed & living roof **£1,500**

TOTAL: £19,107

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Clearance & excavations **3 days**

Paving **4 days**

Laying lawn **1 day**

Erecting screens **1 day**

Seating **1 day**

Lighting **2 days**

Planting **2 days**

TOTAL: 2 WEEKS

explains Sean. “We used an artificial lawn, which reduced the area to be improved, and also fulfilled the low-maintenance brief.”

The design centres around the use of Corten steel (also known as weathering steel). This material is now extensively used in gardens all over the world and for good reason. The surface rusts, the weathered finish affording the material anti-corrosive properties that gives it an advantage over other structural steels. This makes Corten very durable. The steel can easily be cut and carved so decorative items are also possible, and it withstands heat well so makes a great material for a firepit. Oh, and it looks fabulous, the gradual aging of the surface meaning a garden evolves over time, improving as the warm patina develops. “We had never heard of Corten steel but were delighted to go ahead with Sean’s recommendation,” says Alan.

ALL-SEASON STRUCTURE

The redesign has completely transformed this blank space into a garden with distinct areas, clearly marked by the different materials. The patio is paved in a light-coloured stone, the paving continuing in the form of stepping stones across the artificial lawn. This leads between the steel screens to a matching paved area at the back of the plot, where the shed and bins are tucked away. As well as hiding these practical necessities from view, the decorative screens break up the space to give the illusion of a much larger garden.

“We maximised the small space with raised planters and bespoke seating,” says Sean. Everything is dual purpose to make the most of the space. “The Corten steel panels are decorative but also screen the shed and create a convenient and hidden space for dustbin storage,” explains Sean. “And the seating doubles as log storage for the firebowl, the wood adding another layer of texture.”

Purple pom-poms of verbena and slender spires of lavender pop against the orange tones of the steel, the lofty blooms breaking up the hard expanse of Corten steel. Low-growing ornamental grasses bring sharp shapes to the scheme at ground level. Further shapely features come in the form of two acers planted in Corten steel pots, both illuminated with uplighters to show off their silhouettes against the decorative screens.

MAKING IT THEIR OWN

“Once the design was finished we saw that the back gate was very visible from the house so we decided to purchase another sheet of Corten steel,” says Alan. “And with a half-sheet left over from the initial design, we asked Cube to erect this to shield the gate from the house. That’s been really successful and hides this area from view. I also made a rustic wooden trough for plants with timber left over from the building



SIMPLE SPRAYS of verbena pretty up the patio table.



works which helps to shield the rear fencing, and we fixed square trellis around the whole garden to soften the fence panelling.”

The couple have been enjoying looking after all the plants in their new garden. “We are not really gardeners but, since the redesign, we do

GARDEN MAKEOVER

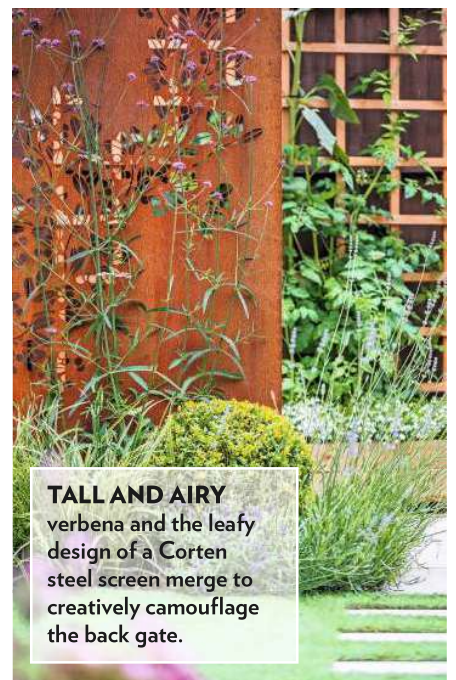
Want your garden to look this good year-round? See p30

BEFORE

Dull and uninviting, there was little to tempt Judy and Alan outdoors



STEEL FLOWER sculptures grace the edge of the water feature.



TALL AND AIRY verbena and the leafy design of a Corten steel screen merge to creatively camouflage the back gate.

all of our own gardening," says Alan. "We take lots of advice, and some plants, from our green-fingered daughter. Growing sunflowers and tomatoes this summer has been lovely. And, as this is the garden's first year, we've enjoyed watching it bloom and attract birds, lots of bees – so many different species – and a very healthy insect population.

"We even added a green roof to the shed with a planting kit, which Judy and I assembled ourselves. It's been an excellent attraction for bees and insects throughout early spring through to summer, and it looks so much nicer than a felted pot roof."

SPACE TO RELAX

The log-filled bespoke bench that nestles between the two potted acers is a favourite spot for Alan and Judy to spend downtime. Another wood-packed bench occupies a corner of the paved patio next to the house where the couple placed a wooden outdoor dining table. "It's a lovely spot to enjoy a light lunch and a glass of wine in the sunshine," says Alan. "Using such experienced designers has really helped our dreams come true, squeezing in the different seating areas as well as my man cave of a shed. The new garden saved our sanity on long lockdown days – it's our private sanctuary."



FABULOUS FOLIAGE brings no-fuss texture to the plot, the leaf shapes highlighted by curvy statues and rusting steel.



Carex oshimensis 'Evergold'



Juncus effusus



Box ball



Stipa tenuissima



Cyperus alternifolius