



OUR GARDEN CRUSH

We'd be hugely happy to **HOLIDAY AT HOME** if our garden was designed for all-weather outdoor living like this leafy gem

When you're a garden designer with a generous 725m² plot, there are no excuses for a less-than-fabulous outside space. But this gorgeous Essex garden, belonging to Sean Butler of garden design company Cube1994 (cube1994.com) and wife, Jane, surpasses all expectations. Primarily used as an entertaining space for family and friends, at its heart is a secluded sunken area with lounging and dining spaces sheltered from the wind and surrounded by trees and beds of aromatic blooms.

UNDERCOVER AREA

A circular building offers a shady retreat on hot summer days and a cosy escape in the rain. "We call it 'Jabba the Hutt,'" says Sean. "It's an experimental building made of concrete blocks, clad with cedar, and a cedar shingle roof."

Even the journey to reach it is a treat, on a path that takes you past a tall Corten steel column housing a water blade, and across a long rill, crossed via a stepping stone. Inside the hut is a wood oven surrounded by concrete work surfaces and a 3m-long cantilevered table to sit 10 people. "The walls are clad with vertical textured slate with inset lighting, and there's a driftwood chandelier," adds Sean. "An eclectic mix of industrial-style stools and soft furnishings make it a welcoming space. With underfloor heating and luxurious curtains hung from a bespoke curved steel frame, we can use Jabba all year round."

FOLIAGE AND FLOWERS

Hundreds of plants fill the garden, with over 45 varieties of dahlias alone. Olive trees are underplanted with lavender 'Hidcote' and bearded iris, while Japanese holly has been clipped to form low hedges to frame airy-stemmed flowers. "The plants have been chosen for repeat flowering, longevity and fragrance, with a focus on flowers and foliage that would provide a range of colour and textures for floral arrangements throughout the seasons," explains Sean.

And yes, just to make you a little more green with envy, a floristry studio affords glorious views over the whole plot while the harvest of blooms is being arranged. "Designing my own garden has been a journey of experimentation in new techniques," adds Sean. "It gives me enormous pleasure to see them work and flow seamlessly as I walk through the garden."

FEATURE: EMMA KENDEL, PHOTOS: GAP PHOTOS, SHUTTERSTOCK



The circular hut means rain never stops play in this garden



A riot of aromatic blooms surrounds each seating area.

Salvia 'Caradonna'

Eucalyptus gunnii