

A photograph of a modern outdoor courtyard garden. In the foreground, there is a grey modular sofa with several cushions, including two bright orange ones and a floral patterned one. In front of the sofa are two matching grey ottomans. To the right, a square white fire pit with a black metal frame sits on a grey stone patio. The background features a dark grey wooden slat wall and a lush green hedge. The overall atmosphere is contemporary and inviting.

# “It’s year-round fun & games”

Barbecues, swims & table tennis... it’s all happening in this **SOUTH-FACING GEM!**

## **GARDEN** *makeover*

**H**ard to believe that this enticing contemporary courtyard garden, designed for outdoor living and entertaining, was once a barely used space, isn’t it? “We would dread sitting out there, as the layout didn’t work, and it meant always having to traipse through the utility room for access,” says owner Louise Gillham. But today, this cleverly redesigned walled garden is reminiscent of the luxury hotels and clubs Louise loves to visit.

Before Louise and husband Mark became parents, they lived in Hertford town, in a small, Grade II listed cottage. “We moved in April 2007, when I was seven months pregnant with our daughter, Mia,” recalls Louise. “We wanted to be further out into the country to be closer to our chosen school for the children, and we love the small village that we live in now, with easy access to London. We both grew up five miles away from Hertford and really wanted

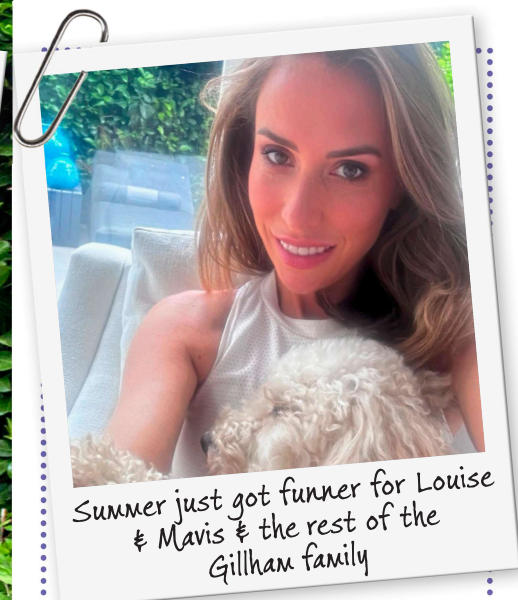
to stay in the area around our family and friends. We adore living among the beautiful countryside, which also enables us to walk our dog, Cavapoo Mavis.” The couple now have two children, Mia, 17, and Zac, 15.

On buying their new grade II-listed barn, Mark and Louise inherited an overgrown, uninspiring courtyard garden, but the house came with existing planning permission to add double-height bifold doors into the main hallway. “They add so much light into



## GARDEN MAKEOVER

Hornbeam



### OUR GARDEN PLAN

**LOCATION** Hertfordshire  
**THE LOOK** Modern outdoor living  
**SITE** Size 25m x 8m **Faces** South-east  
**Soil** Clay with soil improver

#### OUR BUDGET

Clearance **£10,000** Hard landscaping, foundations & walls for pool **£60,000**  
 Grey porcelain paving **£60,000**  
 Bespoke bench seat **£5,000**  
 Grillo outdoor kitchen **£5,000**  
 In-lite lighting **£4,000** Planting & trees **£18,000**  
 Torc pots **£4,000** Furniture & pool already purchased  
**TOTAL: £166,000**

#### HOW LONG IT TOOK

Clearance **1 week** Hard landscaping **2 weeks**  
 Paving **1 week** Hot tub install **1 day**  
 Bespoke bench **2 days** Kitchen **1 day**  
 Trees & planting **2 days** Lighting **2 days**  
 Torc pots **1 day**  
**TOTAL: 6 WEEKS**

BEFORE



the space,” says Louise. “My style is very much contemporary, but I love working around the house’s natural beauty and original features. We have exposed so many beams that were covered up, and kept them simple to show off their natural beauty.”

#### AGAINST ALL ODDS

Louise spent some time contemplating the design and style for their outdoor space. “I have researched in magazines, on Pinterest,

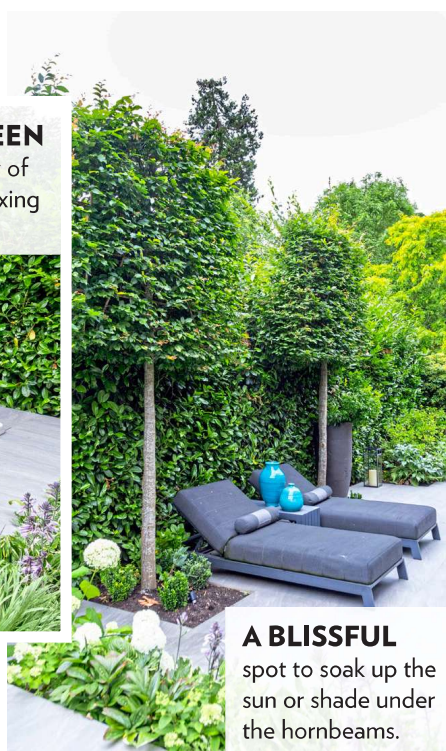
and visited so many beautiful hotels and venues that have given me inspiration,” she shares. “One of my favourite hotels is Corinthia London and also Ham Yard for the quirky interiors. We also spend a lot of time visiting Soho Farmhouse in Oxfordshire and really love the modern but laidback feel of all of these combined.”

It was during an online search that one design team in particular caught Louise’s eye. “We stumbled across CUBE 1994





**AN EVERGREEN** wall offers plenty of privacy for a relaxing dip in the pool.



**A BLISSFUL** spot to soak up the sun or shade under the hornbeams.

Landscape Garden Design on Instagram and saw some of their modern and contemporary ideas that looked incredible," she enthuses. "We also wanted to be able to see the garden virtually before creating it, and Cube allowed us to do that."

Thinking back to when he first visited, CUBE director Sean Butler remembers: "The original garden had a simple courtyard design, with minimal planting. The client's brief was for a contemporary design to create an indoor/outdoor feel, with multiple zones to include lounge, dining and pool areas, with access from the house to a built-in outdoor kitchen area, and simple structural planting."

Once the virtual design was approved, work could begin, but the build was tricky. "Access was very limited," explains Sean. "Smaller materials were wheelbarrowed into the garden through the utility room in the barn, and the concrete was also pumped through there. The utility room therefore had to be layered with full protection to avoid damaging the floors and walls. The digger, steel mesh for the pool foundations, and the pool itself, were all carefully craned over the barn into position."

"We created a seamless flow between the indoors and outdoors. The outdoor lounge, dining and pool areas can now be accessed from all sides of the house, and are designed

to complement the property. A bespoke wooden bench seat was designed into one side of the concrete walls surrounding the pool; raised bed planting wraps around the other side."

A Grillo Vantage kitchen, with barbecue, fridge and sink, now provides everything you need for outdoor entertaining. And existing planting was filled out with a simple palette of lime-greens and whites, with laurel hedging and pleached hornbeams added for privacy. Four tall Torc Vali pots enhance the central entrance, and add interest to the planting areas.

Louise also recalls how hard the build was. "It was a scary day seeing the pool hovering over our house! The poor workmen had to keep running wheelbarrows through the house the whole time, but they were beyond tidy and considerate, and everything they did was immaculate. We had workmen here on site every single day for around six weeks, but it was a seamless process, with very little disruption, considering."

### PLANTS, AND THAT POOL!

Planting-wise, Louise and Mark decided to keep things simple and understated. "We chose evergreen plants," says Louise. "Pleached trees, and borders with just hydrangeas, which are my favourite flowers. I wanted all-year-round colour and to always have greenery, despite the season. We have created this. Sadly, we did lose some large trees in the frost last winter. We love our garden, and do potter, but we can't



**EUONYMUS JAPONICUS** in the spotlight!



take the credit for it looking so good. We use DP Landscapes, who do an incredible job all year round and guide us on any areas that need some TLC."

The Hydropool AquaTrainer is a hybrid hot tub, jacuzzi and pool, with jets that can be set to create a current allowing you to swim, making it fantastic both for exercising and relaxing. And it's an absolute hit with the Gillham family! "This courtyard has its own microclimate: it is a south-facing gem that allows us privacy and tranquillity, with some added fun of a hydropool," says Louise. "We absolutely love it, and use the garden all the time. It's an extended living room for us, especially now the kids are teens and enjoy having friends over and using the pool. We love to entertain, and Mark owns a meat wholesale company, so there is always a barbecue on the go, all year round. We have an outdoor kitchen, so he is able to prepare the meat at his own station! We wouldn't change a thing about our

## SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

**\* ADD LAUREL HEDGING** and pleached hornbeams for privacy.

**\* GO BIG WITH STATEMENT POTS** to frame an entrance.

**\* CREATE ZONES** using raised beds of lush planting.



## GARDEN MAKEOVER

**HOT TUB, JACUZZI**  
and pool in one... we're in love! AquaTrainer, from £33,995 [hydropoolspas.co.uk](http://hydropoolspas.co.uk)

**LUSH FOLIAGE**  
& large blousy flowering shrubs soften the hard edges of the patio.

**A COSY CORNER**  
complete with firepit... and is that a football table sneaking into the shot?!

The Torc ([torcpots.com](http://torcpots.com)) of the patio – a statement pot, filled with *Choisya ternata*

garden, and can't imagine adding anything. The occasional football or table-tennis table creeps in though! We love our lounge, where we have a firepit table, and the kids live in the pool area. We entertain all the time, and access from the kitchen straight into the garden is brilliant now. Any excuse to celebrate out there, we will!"

*Add a stylish side table to your plot too, see p28*

### PLANT HEAVEN

Planting is pared back but no less lovely...



Dryopteris



Pelargonium 'Horizon White'



Rose 'Iceberg'



Hosta 'Diamond Tiara'



Hydrangea 'Annabelle'