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# GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

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## IN BRIEF

What Private family garden.  
Where Hampshire  
Size Eight acres in total,  
including a one-and-a-half  
acre ornamental garden.  
Soil Silty loam that is prone  
to waterlogging.  
Climate Temperate, but  
with strong westerly winds.  
Hardiness zone USDA 8

The house sits comfortably in  
its setting, thanks to the highly  
textured gardens enclosing  
it. Vertical *Calamagrostis x  
acutiflora* 'Stricta' contrasts  
with plump balls of clipped yew,  
the bold daisies of *Echinacea  
purpurea* 'White Swan' and  
lacy, blue *Salvia* 'Blue Spire',  
formerly *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire'.

# Visual effects

Thanks to Jane Brown's technical design skills, a Hampshire garden of timeless charm is firmly anchored in its stunning surroundings

WORDS JODIE JONES PHOTOGRAPHS CLAIRE TAKACS

# The owners wanted colour, texture and year-round interest as well as lots of different outdoor living spaces

**M**y initial brief was to hide the house, although at that point the house only existed in a set of architectural plans," says designer Jane Brown, walking round the Hampshire garden she has been working on for ten years. It shows unusual foresight for a client to start thinking about their garden at such an early stage, but, says Jane, "the owners are both designers specialising in interior lighting, so they have a good eye and really care about details. They also lived in the house next door for many years and always coveted the view from this piece of land." When they got the chance

to turn fantasy into reality they wanted to create something really special, with a house built in brick, flint and stone, with steeply pitched tiled roofs and large windows with a faintly Gothic detail in the glazing bars. "It is beautiful, but, in a sea of post-construction devastation, it looked enormous," says Jane.

Her plan from the outset was visually to anchor the house in the surrounding countryside while making the most of its lovely views. "We decided to incorporate lots of trees into a series of heavily planted gardens. The owners are keen gardeners and wanted colour, texture and year-round interest. But they are also very sociable and asked for lots of different outdoor living spaces where they could spend time with friends and their three grown-up children, who visit regularly."

It was a massive undertaking, and although a full masterplan was drawn up at the outset, it was implemented in stages, as resources allowed. "Huge effort went into getting the foundations right, which wasn't easy because the site slopes away quite steeply to the west," says Jane. The best views are to the north, so Jane kept the garden on this rear side of the house relatively open. There is a stone terrace with plenty of space for socialising, and broad, shallow steps leading down to a wide lawn that was specifically proportioned to accommodate a large marquee for formal entertaining.

"The garden comes to a bulge here, which I disguised by planting an avenue of clipped hawthorn trees within box-edged beds that frames the view. At the bulge in the boundary I put a ha-ha to invisibly divide the garden proper from the neighbouring field with its sheep," says Jane. It is a tremendously effective bit of visual trickery, typical of Jane's great skill with the technicalities of garden design.

Equally clever and understated is the brick and flint wall on one side of the Ornamental Garden. Like the house, it appears to have been there forever, but was dreamed up to conceal a sharp slope away from the house. "It gives a sense of enclosure in a part of the garden that could otherwise have felt exposed, and was designed to provide a backdrop for a greenhouse, although that wasn't installed for several more years, while the owners got the main plantings established," says Jane. Today, the Alitex model they chose, with bespoke glazing bars that echo the windows of the house, also looks perfectly at home.

The family spend as much of their time in the garden as possible, relishing a sense of enclosure that never veers into claustrophobia. Dozens of trees, including amelanchiers, phillyreas, acers and *Cornus kousa*, help define the sequence of gardens that lead all round the house, linked by paths of gravel, brick and a touch of local flint. The expansive flowerbeds are filled with an explosion of salvias and echinaceas, perovskia, euphorbias and ornamental grasses, and dainty *Stipa tenuissima* seeds into the paths, along with erigeron and *Alchemilla mollis*. The overall effect is extremely pretty, but the underlying architecture provides a robust framework that stops it degenerating into chocolate-box cliché.

The original vision now appears complete, but keen gardeners with land are never satisfied and Jane and the owners are still dreaming up extensions to their original plan. The descending land behind the greenhouse wall was recently reimagined as a Secret Garden wrapped around by wildflower meadows, leading to an orchard and on to a secluded stumpery with an evolving collection of ferns and hellebores. Meanwhile, at the other side of the garden, up a slope filled with roses and choisya, buddleja, lilac and *Viburnum opulus*, a giant digger is currently cutting steps into the bank. "This leads to the highest part of the garden, which already has a few good trees, so the idea is to make a mini-arboretum, encourage the native wildflowers and make another nice space for casual meals," says Jane.

A lichen-dusted table and festoon lights strung between the trees mean this farthest corner of the garden is already well worth a visit. The recent appearance of wild orchids only adds to its attractions. In a garden with so many nooks and crannies, why would you want to go anywhere else? □

## USEFUL INFORMATION

Find out more about Jane's work at [janebrown.co.uk](http://janebrown.co.uk)

See more of the garden and its planting combinations over the next six pages ▷



In front of the bespoke Alitex greenhouse, clipped trees of bay and *Phillyrea latifolia* combine with *Amelanchier x grandiflora* 'Robin Hill', white *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', pink *Pennisetum orientale* 'Karley Rose' and soft-blue perovskia.



### Four plant combinations

**Above** Using a natural bank to best advantage, Jane has massed a selection of shrubs – some chosen for flower, others for structure – the pretty rose 'Blanche Double de Coubert' and a bold splash of purple from *Cotinus coggygria* 'Royal Purple'. Masses of lime-green *Alchemilla mollis* and fluffy *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln' tumble on to the main lawn.

**Below** In one narrow bed Jane has orchestrated a long season of interest in soft, smoky shades that complement the stone walls behind them. *Echinops ritro* 'Veitch's Blue', *Verbena bonariensis*, *Salvia* 'Blue Spire' and *Agapanthus* Headbourne hybrids form a harmonious tapestry of lavenders and blues interspersed with silvery clumps of *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle', while pale plumes of *Stipa tenuissima* frame the doorway.



**Above** Looking across a deep bed filled with *Phlomis russeliana*, *Salvia* 'Amistad', *Agastache* 'Blackadder', *Euphorbia palustris* and a froth of *Ammi majus*, two comfortable reclining chairs in the Secret Garden are framed by deer-nibbled yews. In the background, *Pterocarya fraxinifolia*, *Betula nigra* and *Cornus kousa* bridge the divide between garden and countryside.

**Below** Flanking the drawing room doors, large domes of yew rise out of a sea of *Alchemilla mollis* and *Salvia* 'Blue Spire'. Upright spikes of *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Stricta' frame the foreground, while the bed at the back is filled with the feathery, pink panicles of *Pennisetum orientale* 'Karley Rose', bright-green *Euphorbia palustris* and lavender-blue *Aster x frikartii* 'Mönch'.



The underlying architecture provides a robust framework that stops the garden slipping into chocolate-box cliché



Looking towards the house from the meadow, it is clear how the gentle steps and low retaining wall leading on to the lawn anchor the building to its setting. This impression is reinforced by the clipped columns of *Carpinus betulus* and repeating buxus balls.



**Above** Looking along the back of the house, a two-tier water feature makes a virtue out of a step down in the levels. The driftwood 'throne' sitting on a carpet of flint doubles as sculpture amid a sway of lime-green *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' and fluffy, pink *Pennisetum orientale* 'Karley Rose'.

**Below** Amid a pared-back mix of *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Stricta', *Amelanchier x grandiflora* 'Robin Hill' and box balls, recycled cobbles and a traditional-style greenhouse give the Ornamental Garden a timeless air. Within the central circles of cobbles, a verdigris planter acts as a focal point.



**Above** At its most formal, the rear elevation of the house is framed by an avenue of *Crataegus persimilis* 'Prunifolia' edged in low box hedges, although the bedroom windows are festooned with a charming combination of *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and repeat-flowering old rose 'Madame Alfred Carrière'.

**Below** Columns of clipped hornbeam and onion domes of yew provide an evergreen frame that sets off the front elevation of the house. A thick skirt of *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead', *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', and spikes of *Phlomis russelliana* and *Salvia* 'Blue Spire' complete the picture.

