

CONDÉ NAST

House & Garden

SOUTH AFRICA

JULY 2012 R42,50 (incl. VAT)
OTHER COUNTRIES R37

Design Now

- SPOT-ON LIGHTING IDEAS
- STYLE UPDATE FOR SOFAS

In the Garden
Planting secrets for a modern meadow

EASY RECIPES
for vegetarian entertaining

South African SPECIAL

Great Living • Amazing Spaces • Cool Interiors

12007



9 771028 989004

IN THE GARDEN

INTERNATIONAL GARDEN | PLANTS | KNOW HOW | GARDEN NEWS

PLAYING MATCHMAKER

Landscape architect Jane Brown remodelled a featureless garden in an English valley to include discrete spaces where classical elements are combined with modern design features

TEXT CAMILLA PHELPS PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

THE BACKDROP OF THE ROLLING HILLS CAN BE SEEN FROM ANY POINT IN THE GARDEN



The Old Rectory in West Sussex nestles comfortably in a gentle valley. At first glance, the garden looks as though it has clothed the stone house for years. With rich planting and beautiful warm sandstone landscaping, it has a deceptive maturity. But on closer inspection, the modern styling of an expert hand reveals itself.

When landscape architect Jane Brown took on the project, the existing garden was 'very sparse'. Laid to an uneven lawn with a few trees, a pool and a tennis court, it was fairly bleak. 'The initial brief was simply to create a space for the family, with an organic vegetable garden. But the client has a keen eye for art and design and was interested in developing the garden further. Once we got going, things snowballed, and the design evolved over two years.'

It is a sizeable property totalling eight hectares, although the garden occupies only around two, including a meadow and sports pitch. 'From the outset,' Brown explains, 'I wanted to design a garden that would complement the Victorian house without being old-fashioned, so it was very much about combining classical elements with modern. The garden lent itself to being divided into a series of spaces or "rooms", but a key challenge involved how to subtly change the levels around the house. We did it by introducing steps and a raised area.'

Using traditional materials with a confident, modern approach, Brown united what had been a loose collection of spaces around the house to create a more structured journey through the garden. A stroll may take you past exuberant mixed herbaceous and grassy borders, through a shady courtyard formed by box-head hornbeams with a simple stone trough at the centre, down to a sunken terrace with a view towards the pool and past bog planting that steers you towards the beautiful vegetable garden. Each space commands its own atmosphere, while also sitting comfortably in relation to the house and



INTERNATIONAL GARDEN

'I TEND TO VEER AWAY FROM OVER-ORNATE GARDENS — I LIKE KEEPING THINGS NATURAL' JANE BROWN

the surrounding landscape. 'I tend to veer away from over-ornate gardens — I like keeping things natural,' says Brown. 'We were trying to create a garden that gave the impression of having been there for quite some time, but still had a modern twist. There is the wonderful backdrop of the hills that you can always see from any point, so it was important for the garden not to impose on the landscape too much.'

Brown deliberately used a limited range of materials for the hard landscaping. 'Lots of the materials relate to the house,' she says. 'The aim was to keep it simple. We used green oak for the pergola and raised beds in the vegetable garden, and for the pool wall I sourced Sussex sandstone to match the house as closely as possible.'

The subtle details bring out the modern elements of the design. Steps set into the wall of the pool terrace seem distinctly of the moment, taking you to a hidden platform for views across the garden to the rolling countryside. In the sunken terrace, the same sandstone is used for the retaining walls, but there the blocks are set on their ends, lending a 21st-century note.

The same subtle melding of traditional and modern can be seen in the planting. In a corner set aside for winter interest, a grove of white-stemmed Himalayan birches is planted on a ▶

ABOVE A SUNKEN TERRACE PROVIDES A TRANQUIL AND SECLUDED SPOT TO ENJOY THE SURROUNDINGS BELOW. GRASSES SUCH AS CALAMAGROTIS ACUTIFLORA 'KARL FOERSTER' FORM BOLD BLOCKS OF BRONZE COLOUR IN THE BACK BORDERS IN AUTUMN OPPOSITE PAGE. STEPS AND RAISED AREAS WERE INTRODUCED TO CREATE DIFFERENT LEVELS AROUND THE HOUSE.





CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT THE ORNAMENTAL VEGETABLE GARDEN SUPPLIES BOTH THE RECTORY AND THE OWNERS' LONDON HOME; A BENCH HAS BEEN STRATEGICALLY PLACED TO ALLOW THE GARDEN VISITOR TO CONTEMPLATE THE VIEWS; THE GARDEN CONSISTS OF A SERIES OF INTERCONNECTED SPACES, INCLUDING THIS SHADY COURTYARD FORMED BY BOX-HEAD HORNBEAMS



MOST OF THE PLANTS ARE CHOSEN FOR DROUGHT TOLERANCE, AS THERE IS NO WATERING SYSTEM

tight geometric grid. The romantic rose garden is full of wild species mingling with shrubs and perennials. A box of parterre is planted in a star shape, and *Rosa* 'Madame Alfred Carrière' has its own green-oak pergola, right at the heart of the vegetable garden.

Most of the plants are chosen for drought tolerance, as there is no watering system. The colour palette drifts from ruby reds in early summer to late-autumn oranges and golds. At this time of year the grassy borders come into their own with bold bronze blocks of *Calamagrostis acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' and *Miscanthus* varieties, including 'Gracillimus', 'Ferner Osten' and 'Malepartus' mixed with *Stipa arundinacea*, *Stipa tenuissima* and late-flowering *Hemerocallis* and *Aster x frikartii* 'Monch'. 'The grasses speak for themselves and look great with other seed heads. With the *aconitums* and asters there is still some colour and the garden looks good well into October,' says Brown.

For all the stunning visual impact of views and planting, this is still very much a family garden, run by head gardener Caroline Mathias, who has continued to develop the garden with the planting of an arboretum. The vegetable garden is integral to family life, supplying both the rectory and the owners' London home year-round. Play areas are as important as the aesthetics, from

the 'secret' pathway that snakes behind the big borders, to the path through the wild-flower meadow that leads to an idyllic tree house designed by Brown. It has all the magical charm of a traditional country garden, with just enough of a modern twist to bring it right up to date.

■ Brown Associates www.janebrown.co.uk

