

NEW FLAME

Landscaping Solutions

Bold, architectural design and a fireplace bring elegance to this contemporary London garden.

The rear garden of this South London terraced house represents an average-sized project for one of our three-men teams at Landscaping Solutions. There was a bit more to this particular project than usual, but in terms of the size of the plot it can be regarded as a bread and butter job. Transforming a space this size always presents a number of stresses and strains. The first was for the designer; how to make the client's brief come to life?

We've worked successfully with Simon Thomas of the London Garden Design Company on many projects over the years. His design for this space was thoughtful and exciting. The client wanted it to be a space in which to entertain and one that would also provide entertainment. The strong geometrical layout and the structural planting would provide sharp symmetry and hold interest through the seasons while being low maintenance. The client visualised a contemporary space for relaxation and reflection, that flowed on seamlessly from the interior.

The hard landscaping features would be bold and architectural. They wanted three distinct sections; a terrace area to the rear including a fireplace, a central water feature or pool and an open dining area next to the kitchen. Not forgetting storage, lighting, irrigation, seating and drainage considerations. Simon's design incorporated the client's entire wish list while also making the garden appear much larger.

LIMITED ACCESS

Work began with the clearance of the existing site and laying out the new design. Being a London garden, the only point of entry and exit was the front door and so all materials – including at least 10 tonnes of existing soils and turf, stone paving and a timber deck – passed through the property. One of our daily tasks involves making it look as if nobody has been in the house and that all the dirt and waste is somehow levitated into the skip – a part of our service that is extremely important to us.

Once the space was cleared and the design laid out the garden started to take shape. As

ABOUT LANDSCAPING SOLUTIONS

Landscaping Solutions Landscaping Solutions is a Surrey-based company dedicated to creating and maintaining first class private gardens throughout London and the South East, helping designers and their clients to realise projects with minimum fuss and maximum attention to detail. Managing director Ben West is a Capel Manor trained garden designer and horticulturalist with experience working in the horticultural and construction sectors, both at home and overseas. The company's most recent honour is a 2011 BALI Principle Award and it aims to add another RHS medal this year with a conceptual garden in the Hampton Court show.



The relaxed ambience at night is enhanced by subtle lighting on the boundary screening and beneath the step treads, as well as LEDs recessed into the paving and raised beds.

with most small town gardens, the boundary lines were the first structures to go up, followed by the block work footings, paving sub-base materials and the pool base. It was decided that the fireplace wall would be in a raised position above the rest of the garden, so a terrace was created in the rear third of the space with steps leading up from the pool area.

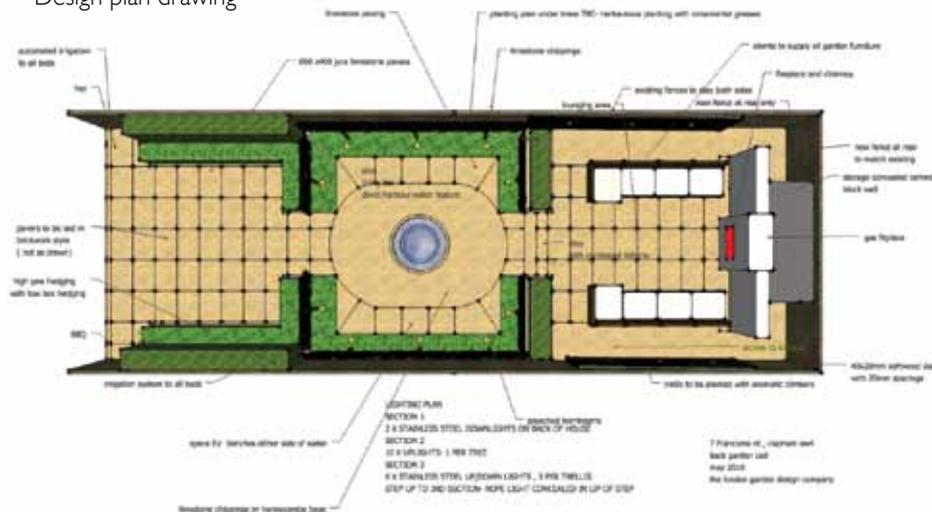
The foundations for the fireplace wall were reinforced with steel and vertical steel anchor rods were run up through the centre of the hollow blocks to accommodate the weight of the concrete. The exterior and all the remaining block work was cement rendered and painted in a pastel shade, while the interior of the fireplace itself and the chimney were rendered with a fire resistant cement fondue and painted black. To the rear of the fireplace wall a storage unit was created to house the gas bottle feed for the gas burner and other garden paraphernalia.

The illumination from the flames brings a certain ambience and extends the functionality of the garden into the winter months.

Creating the raised central water feature involved some creativity. The stainless steel David Harber water chalice alone cost around £12,000. In line with the clients' vision, it was decided that the chalice would be a fitting centre focal point. Displaying the chalice in the best possible light involved constructing a circular rendered block work pool, which was treated inside with a fibreglass coating and finished with mosaic tiles. A bull-nosed sandstone coping finished the top of the pool picking out the detail of the bull-nosed sandstone step treads that lead to the upper terrace.

Sawn mint sandstone was sealed and laid down to form the terrace paving throughout the garden. As this paving is porous and easily stained it was important to ensure the water from the pool did not overflow directly on to it. Therefore, a drainage-system was conceived whereby water could be drawn off from the pool via a submersible pump when necessary. Along the flanks of the raised terrace and around the water feature, bands of chipped

Design plan drawing



limestone are retained in 'honeycomb trays', adding an interesting contrast in detail. According to the client, these chippings can be walked on in stiletto heels without fear of stumbling over.

PALETTE OF PLANTS

The hard landscaping is softened with a restrained but never subdued palette of plants. Raised blocks of pleached *Carpinus betulus* on either side of the garden add height and structure. The strict lines of the screen fencing are broken by scrambling *Lonicera japonica* 'Halliana' and then mended by the formal ranks of *Buxus sempervirens* and *Taxus baccata* hedging in the raised beds. Against this evergreen backdrop, clouds of summer colour gather in the form of herbaceous perennials such as *Verbena bonariensis*, *Foeniculum vulgare* 'Giant Bronze' and *Crocsmia* 'Lucifer'. Rhythm

and punctuation is added to the scene with the inclusion of *Stipa tenuissima* and *Iris palida*. The planting is watered by a tap-mounted drip irrigation system feeding all the beds.

At night the garden is illuminated by stainless steel light fittings along the boundary screening, LED lights recessed into the paving and the raised beds, strip lights beneath the step treads and spot lights among the planting. The electrics are powered via a remote control system which allows the client to activate any of the light fittings and the pump from wherever they happen to be, inside or outside the property.

The clients were delighted with the results and the realisation of their vision. Following completion of the garden, the scheme was entered into the 2011 BALI National Landscape awards where we had the pleasure and honour of receiving the Principle Award in the £20,000-£50,000 domestic garden category.

REFERENCES

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