

Chelsea Flower Show 2008

New Ground Landscapes: client's brief

1) Describe purpose/theme of your garden

The importance of the front garden is constantly being eroded, with developers not creating them or residents concreting over them to allow for parking. This garden is different – it shows how the owners of a terraced house, in the middle of a city or town, can not only have their own private garden space, but can also contribute aesthetically to their local environment. It is about bringing planting and visual beauty to a 'hard' environment, while allowing owners free expression and continued seasonal interest.

2) Garden structures and boundaries

As this is a terraced garden, and is only accessible from the front. At the back of the space is the house, which is part render and hardwood panelling. There are also painted rendered walls to midway point along each boundary and hardwood fencing continues to the front. The assumed pavement level is lower than the front door so the garden is made up of different levels with steps up to the front door that welcomes visitors. A water feature to the right of the door falls into a block steel pool below via a series of pipes running along the steel rill and dropping into a lower pool.

3) Type of soil

This garden assumes a loam-based, neutral pH soil the type you could expect to see in an urban area. We would expect that it would have been predominantly imported soil over the years, with good drainage and average fertility. The aspect is south west but sheltered, so the garden benefits from good sun and light levels for the best part of the day with the trees giving some dappled shade.

4) Choice of hard materials

The hard landscaping features will be of key visual interest but shall not over-dominate. The oak panelling on the house and side fences give texture and colour; the pale rendered walls along the boundary and retaining the raised water rills give a contemporary feel; and the paving (of both warm red Belgian bricks and diamond-sawn sandstone slabs) gives interest and detail. An oak seat occupies space to the left of the garden, while bespoke Whichford Potteries pots adorn the front steps. The water features are constructed of steel to give a contemporary feel.

5) Choice of plants

As in any urban environment, the plants must be tolerant of sometimes extreme conditions and able to visually 'soften' the surroundings. This planting, which is a mix of woody shrubs, bamboos, perennials and grasses, combines a considered colour palette of purple, pinks, whites, blues and greens/greys – they fit harmoniously together to bring a calm yet defined colour contribution. Multi-stemmed specimen trees, such as *Prunus serrula*, a large *Acer palmatum* and *Nandina domestica* give height, while square-clipped *Buxus* balls give definition. Throughout, the planting mingles and merges, with scent never being far away – rosemary, thyme and other herbs will be used. Spiky grasses, towers of flowering perennials, and lower-grower tougher planting along the pavement edge help give this a modern yet horticulturally - interesting feel.