Small spaces, big thinking

Tall trees, large planters and capacious seating can all be applied to more intimate garden plots and these lovely examples illustrate how generosity in design pays off

1.

Window dressing

Garden designer Isabel Bannerman is renowned for romantic, abundant use of scrambling, rambling, trailing and framing roses designed to adorn freestanding walls, pergolas, obelisks and gateways – and she deploys them in the smallest of humus-rich footprints. Lilac-hued, single-flowering, almost thornless rambler *Rosa* 'Veilchenblau' has grown quickly to bedeck this sash window with a profusion of citrus-scented blooms in June/July. Other choice rambling or climbing roses include: white 'Rambling Rector' and 'Wedding Day', soft yellow 'Malvern Hills' and 'Teasing Georgia', and pale pink 'Mary Delany' and 'May Queen'.

FEATURE JACKY HOBBS **PHOTOGRAPH** JACKY HOBBS

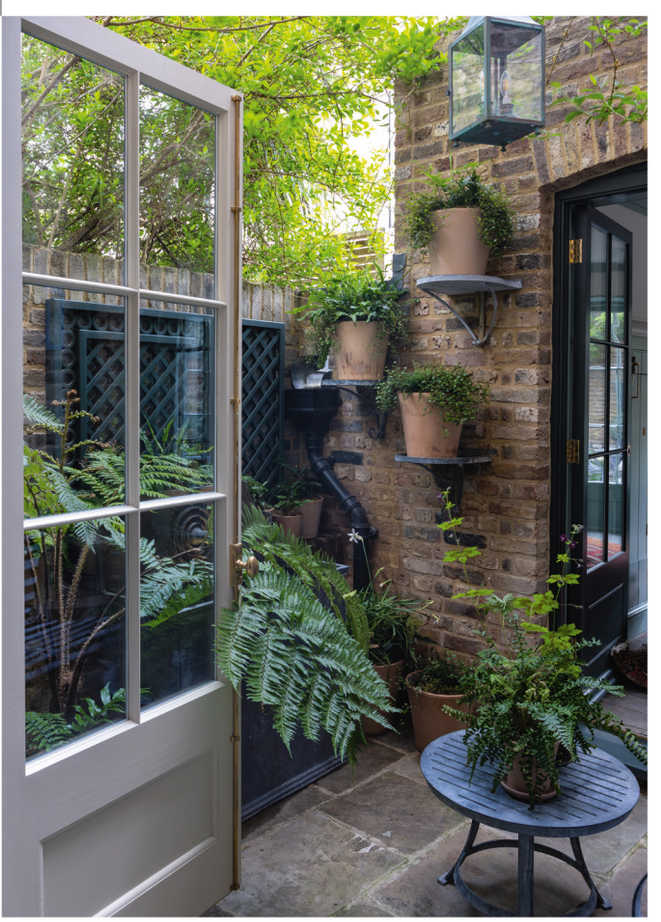


2.
Dramatic curves

Naomi Ferrett-Cohen's award-winning RHS Chelsea design deploys a raft of techniques to increase the size perception – 'when designing small spaces I often use curves to soften garden boundaries, drawing the eye away from the space's limitations and creating a sense of calm. Curved lines encourage movement and relaxation. Raising planting beds to eye level when seated allows the greenery to envelop you, fostering a cocooning effect that immerses you in nature. This transforms a confined space into a more intimate, nurturing environment. Incorporating a water feature further enhances the sensory experience. The soothing sound of trickling water promotes tranquillity, masking outside noise and creating a peaceful, expansive feel in even the smallest garden spaces.'

3.
Filled to the brim

This bijou space, designed by Butter Wakefield, 'uses reclaimed Yorkstone, laid to mirror the internal kitchen floor. This tiny area measures just 3x2.5 metres but is packed with interest: a hollow metal pole fixed overhead supports an antique lantern; the water feature brings sound and movement; trellis panels and a trio of metal wall brackets dress the wall and add vertical interest; and lots of shade-loving ferns adorn ground-level planters,' she explains. 'It is too small for dining out, but by squeezing a two-seater bench and small round table into the space, we created a splendid quiet enclave for a morning cup of coffee or a spot of afternoon tea.' →



PHOTOGRAPHS (DRAMATIC CURVES) SARAH CUTTLE; (FILLED TO THE BRIM) ELLIE WALPOLE



4.

White & light

The link between inside and out has been emphasised by designer Roberto Silva using light, bright surface tiles. The sweeping circular design pushes back the boundary to dense and enveloping shrubs, which wrap the seemingly enlarged space with privacy. 'This Parisian-style garden, inspired by Chanel's trademark black and white logo, was designed for a client in the fashion industry. The strong, circular geometry centres and holds the eye, creating instant impact from above. The rendered, white-painted raised beds add height while framing the patterned floor tiles. The symmetrical planting scheme reinforces the geometry, with mirror-image *Acer japonica* and climbing *Trachelospermum jasminoides* and *Jasminum officinale*, and frames the focal-point, wall-mounted firepit.'

5.

Bountiful planting

Inspired Earth Design showed this garden at RHS Hampton Court, proving that geometric Corten steel planters and water features complemented by in-between planting can be arranged to fit any space. Judith Yeo of Inspired Earth Design has this advice: 'One of the key considerations for a small garden is to allocate at least half to planting to create multiple vistas while encouraging exploration of the space. Utilise height by including trees and climbers to create an immersive composition. Restrict your palette to RHS AGM plants and plant in groups with repetition across the space to create a sense of rhythm and cohesion. Finally, add water – a small, still reflective water bowl will bring the sky into the garden, while a moving rill or bubbling fountain provides a calming sound.'



PHOTOGRAPHS (WHITE & LIGHT) ROBERTO SILVA; (BOUNTIFUL PLANTING) JACKY HOBBS



6.

Brick by brick

Butter Wakefield's acute awareness of scale seemingly amplifies this 'small garden, backed by a large wall, which the house looks onto', making big, bold, cohesive statements in an intimate space. 'At ground level, interest and pattern is created with beautiful Oyster Grey Belgian bricks in different brick bonds. Three *Pyrus calleryana* 'Chanticleer' trees bring height to the boundary, breaking up the large expanse of wall', which is further minimised 'by adding a beautiful dovecote and lovely old stone trough water feature. The antiqued mirror trellis brings depth, detail and reflective light. A selection of large Italian Terrace terracotta pots are planted to add pockets of colour and seasonal interest.' →

PHOTOGRAPH ELLIE WALPOLE



7.

Great heights

Sallis Chandler Landscape Designers & Gardeners' restrained colour palette – shades of green with white – creates a sense of space and calm. 'Layered, clipped planting exploits the volume of the garden and brings big impact without compromising space for visitors to move through while maintaining open garden views. By linking the layout of this modern formal garden to the architectural grid of the building, the sense of space increases. Sight lines pass through principal doors to the focal point – bench seating, recessed into planting on the boundary wall, creating a pause point and views back to the house.'

PHOTOGRAPH CLIVE NICHOLS



8.

In the frame

Garden designer Fi Boyle uses a spiral of evergreen boxwood planting bound by rectangular perimeters to create the 'necessary strong design for this small garden space, 7.5x5.5m, the main focus viewed from the glazed gable end of the house. The configuration of the hedging frames the outer edges, while the inner circles flow around and through the space. The planting delivers year-round interest with the evergreen structure and white roses that flower continuously throughout the growing season. Colour is crucial in a small space, where "less is more" – pale colours make a space feel larger and create a sense of tranquillity. The central, shallow water bowl forms a reflective pool, apparently floating within the planting, and captures movement from the sky.'

9.

Another level

Chelsea 2024 designer Alan Williams, Landform Consultants for Hannam & Taylor, optimises this compact space with tactical design elements. 'A high table and stools save on space and the strategically raised, multi -stem *Betula pendula* accommodates the seating, its canopy providing shade. Consider a multi-stem tree in a small garden for slower growth, choose a variety with striking bark for year-round interest. Creating a sense of immersion, the layered planting provides interest at different levels and wraps around the seating area. The rich colour palette adds depth which cheats the perspective; deep claret *Lysimachia atropurpurea* 'Beaujolais' draws the eye, making the border appear wider. Combining pavers with similarly coloured gravel adds texture and interest without distracting from the naturalistic design.'



PHOTOGRAPHS (IN THE FRAME) CHARLESTON HOMES; (ANOTHER LEVEL) JACKY HOBBS