Leafy Greens

In a small space, a palette of textured green foliage can look super stylish

Dan Cooper created his own calm space in the middle of a busy neighbourhood by using foliage plants. A mix of greens is stylish but simple. Using a selection of textures, shades and shapes creates a tapestry of plants that never looks too busy. Brilliant for creating extra privacy and muffling noise, they create a calm urban sanctuary to enjoy.

FINDING SECLUSION

Leafy plants are brilliant for gardens which are overlooked. Plants that fill out fast and have lots of leaves, but don't get too big, like tall, narrow black bamboos (*Phyllostachys nigra*), create a sense of privacy and make your garden feel more secluded. Taller plants on stems that are almost leafless work well too, as the stems weave together to create a pretty, gauzy veil. Try *Verbena bonariensis*. It grows from ankle to head height in just a few months but still lets the light stream through.

BLOCKING NOISE

Noise can be a nuisance in a small garden, especially in a town, where you feel unable to get away from it. Choosing plants with leaves that rustle in the breeze or dense shrubs that absorb noise, muffles conversations and the hum of traffic. Try the bold leaves of *Fatsia japonica*, or the breezy plumes of silver grasses such as *Miscanthus sinensis*.

STAYING GREEN

Using the shapes of plants to decorate your garden, rather than relying on the colours of flowers, creates a space which will look better for much longer.

Lots of plants with decorative foliage keep their form and textures throughout the year, whereas it's more difficult for a flowering plant to earn its keep. This is especially important in smaller gardens, where every plant can be seen all year round, from the windows of the house.



Choosing shade lovers

Foliage plants are often happy in shade so are good for tricky spots. The larger a plant's leaves, the fewer hours of sun it needs to thrive. Bold leaves look lush and contrast well with verticals and grasses. Plants with large leaves, such as hostas, that grow low to the ground are brilliant for planting at the base of taller plants and adding an extra texture at soil level.



Taller plants will add contrast and height, which creates interest. And many foliage plants offer the bonus of blooms. Royal Fern has elegant looks and is easy to look after, as long as the soil is moist. It's sometimes known as the flowering fern, thanks to its waving russet-brown fronds. Reaching its ultimate height of 1.5-2.5m (4ft 9in-8ft 2in) can take between five and 10 years.

WORDS: LUCY BELLAMY. MAIN IMAGE: ROBERTO SILVA WWW.SILVALANDSCAPES.COM GARDEN DESIGN. OTHER PHOTOS: SHUTTERSTOCK



FAST GROWER
Verbena reaches 2m (6ft 6in) high in a few months. The small flowers add dots of colour on top of skinny stems with narrow leaves.

EXTRA DEPTH
The darker foliage of this phormium planted in a far corner makes the courtyard look bigger.

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