

PLANTING IDEAS • BEAUTIFUL GARDENS • EXPERT ADVICE

20%
OFF
SPRING
BULBS
PAGE 108

GARDENS

ILLUSTRATED

OCTOBER 2016 £4.50

Designers' favourites
**SPRING BULBS TO
PLANT NOW**

*Creating a stylish
family garden*

Pretty in pink

**THE BEST NERINES
AND AMARINES**

The joy of plants

Great ideas for autumn interest

IMMEDIATE
MEDIA



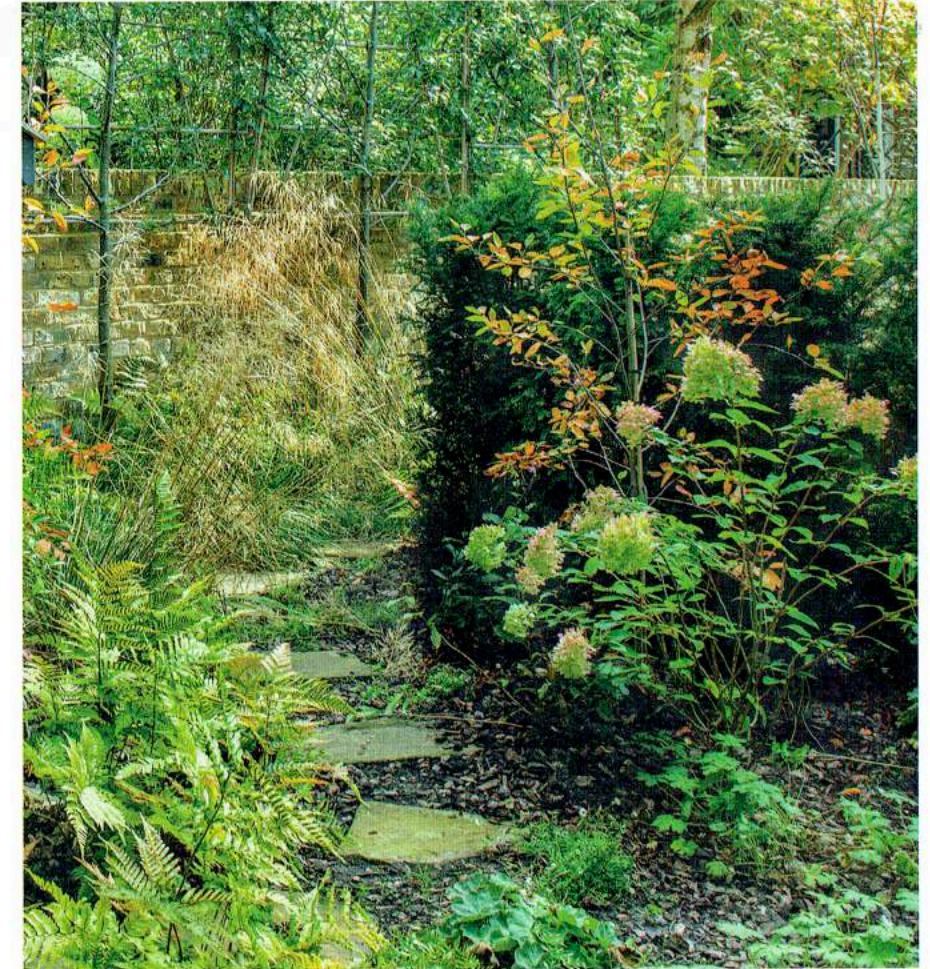


Optical illusion

It may look like a rectangular garden but this stylish, north London plot belies its awkward shape, thanks to designer Sara Jane Rothwell's clever play with planting and landscaping

WORDS LIA LEENDERTZ PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS

In brief
What Modern family garden.
Where Hampstead Heath, London.
Size 21 x 75m.
Climate Mild, London microclimate.
Soil Wet clay.
Hardiness rating USDA 9.



Some houses demand good gardens, and the north London house of the garden that Sara Jane Rothwell was tasked with designing in 2013 is more insistent than most. "It is a traditional building that was undergoing a sympathetic refurbishment, including the addition of a stunning, double-height glass atrium," says Sara Jane. This affords a magnificent view out on to the garden. Indeed, as you step through the front door, the entire garden is laid out before you, framed here and there by a dramatic copper-clad wall or pillar. "It does place great emphasis on the garden design layout," she says.

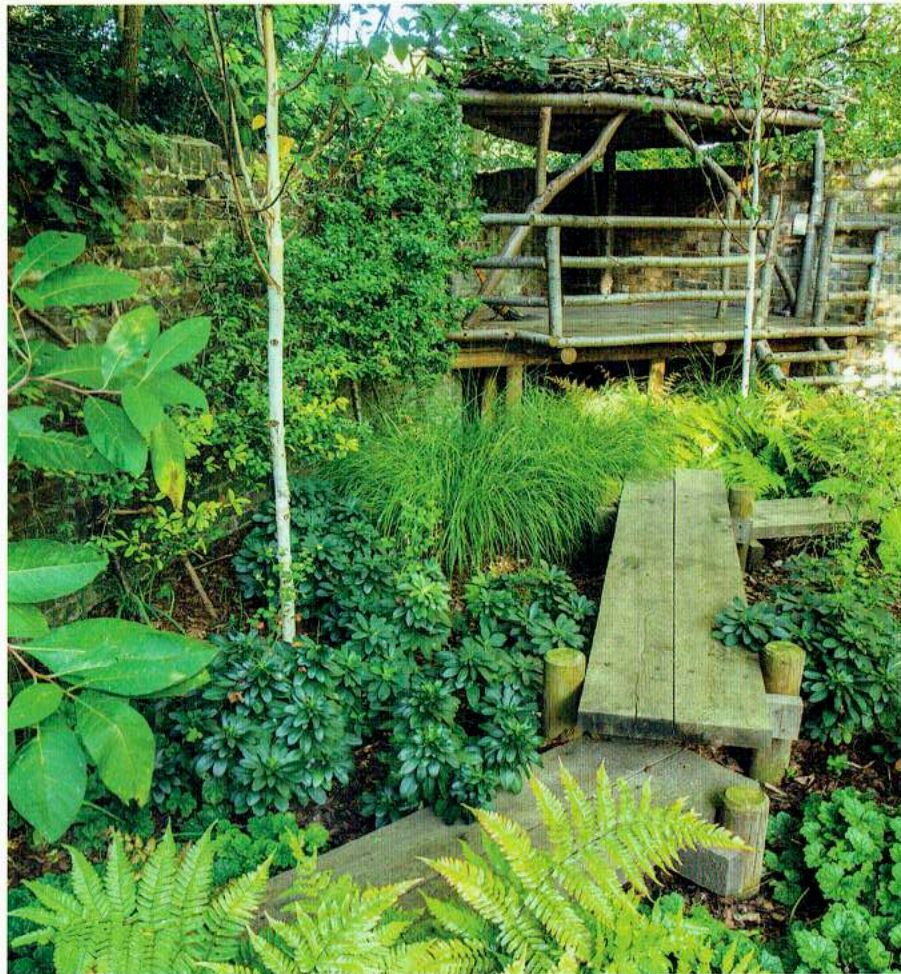
Sara Jane was presented with a long and unusually shaped garden (it widens gradually and ends in a triangle where it meets Hampstead Heath), overgrown and dominated by many large shrubs. Now, however, from the atrium you step out on to

a Yorkstone terrace and up a flight of wide steps, designed to prevent the eye from hitting a wall at this change of level. "The Yorkstone has veins of iron oxide running through it, which picks up the copper tones that have been used in the house," says Sara Jane. At the top of the steps, Sara Jane cleared out most of the overgrown shrubs and imposed a strong and simple rectangular lawn on to the irregularly shaped garden. A large bronze sculpture at the end of one border echoes the coppery theme.

"We chose to follow the lines of the new extension to create a geometric design that belied the awkward triangular plot," says Sara Jane. On one side of the lawn the border is thin, on the other broad, but it is the strong bones of the wide and simple rectangular lawn that draw the eye, and fools it into thinking this is also a rectangular garden. The soil also proved tricky. "The site is very wet ▷

Left Yorkstone steps lead up from a terrace outside the house to a large rectangular lawn. This not only provides an essential playing space for the family's children and dogs, but also helps to create an illusion of symmetry in the oddly shaped garden. Trees link the garden to the neighbouring Hampstead Heath in north London.

Above The subtle, coppery tones in the foliage and flowers of *Dryopteris erythrosora*, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' and *Amelanchier lamarckii* pick up on the copper cladding used inside the house.



▷ and we had drainage issues, and had to install a large soakaway and herringbone drainage system that drains into a large pipe behind the retaining walls and into the lower patio, all hidden underground,” says Sara Jane. But the soil is still fairly moist and, as a result, ferns and grasses love it here but flowers have proved trickier. Roses flourish, as does *Cirsium rivulare* ‘Atropurpureum’ and some phlox. The colour scheme at the rear is monochrome with subtle changes in foliage, punctuated with white Japanese anemones and veronicastrum in autumn. The Japanese shield fern *Dryopteris erythrosora* has been successful and its coppery foliage complements the features. “As a garden it is certainly more lush than colourful, which allows for greater winter interest. The colours are subtle and tonal,” says Sara Jane. The backdrop of Hampstead Heath looms large here, and Sara Jane wanted

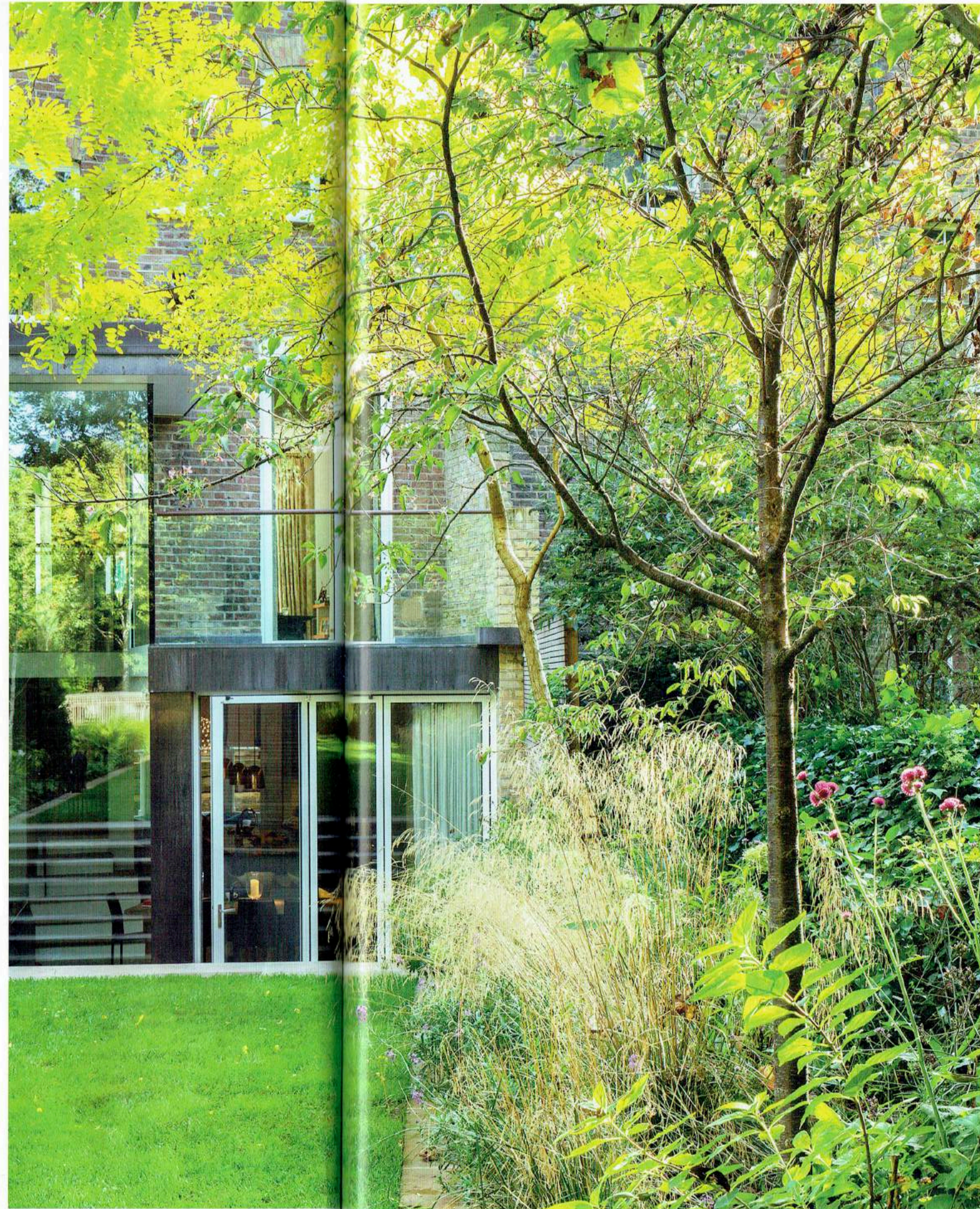
to merge the boundaries between garden and heath. She planted a copse of silver birch trees that blends into the trees on the other side of the boundary wall and echoes several in a neighbour’s garden. She planted more in the garden itself, giving the impression that a little of the heath has spilled over. “This always had to be a garden that worked well from the house, and I feel we have achieved that,” says Sara Jane. “But by creating a seamless transition from garden to heath and by keeping some areas hidden from the house, I think we have created intrigue and fun too, which draws the family into their garden.” □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Sara Jane Rothwell’s company is called the London Garden Designer.
Tel 07976 155282.
Website londongardendesigner.com

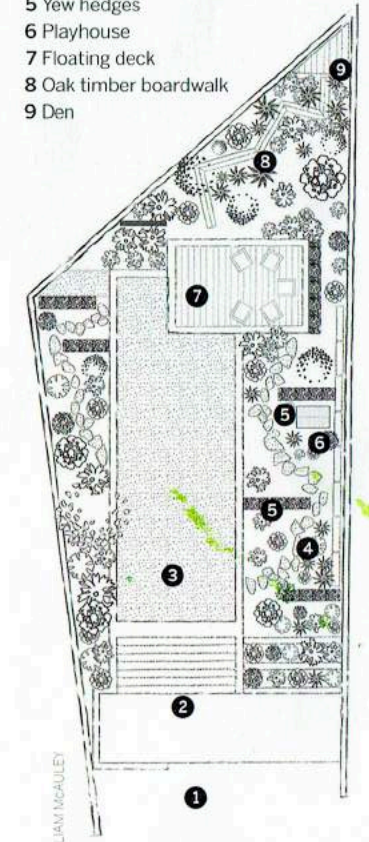
Above An oak boardwalk leads to a timber den. The ground beneath is planted with a green woodland floor of *Dryopteris* ferns, *Anemanthe lessoniana* grass and *Euphorbia amygdaloides*.

Right A double-floored, glass atrium allows broad views over the garden from the house, while light-canopied trees *Prunus x subhirtella* ‘Autumnalis’ and *Robinia pseudoacacia* – here underplanted with *Deschampsia cespitosa* and *Cirsium rivulare* ‘Atropurpureum’ – provide subtle privacy from neighbours.



GARDEN PLAN

- 1 House
- 2 Yorkstone terrace and steps
- 3 Lawn
- 4 Pathway
- 5 Yew hedges
- 6 Playhouse
- 7 Floating deck
- 8 Oak timber boardwalk
- 9 Den



Family gardens

Sara Jane talks through the features she used for this child-friendly garden

- 1 Children are inventive, inquisitive** and resourceful. I find that their imagination makes better use of a garden space when it isn’t specially designed for them.
- 2 An oak timber boardwalk** behind the deck transports you above the planting to a hidden den made from chestnut logs to blend in with the landscape.
- 3 Clipped taxus hedging** creates discreet partitions and can obscure play areas. A second, more traditional, playhouse has been incorporated into the garden, hidden from view by staggered sections of yew hedging.
- 4 The sunniest spot** is towards the rear of the garden, so I created a floating deck with a sunken firepit for the whole family to gather in the garden together.
- 5 With three children** and two dogs, the family wanted a large lawn. It makes up the main sweep of the garden and is framed by stone banding and steps.