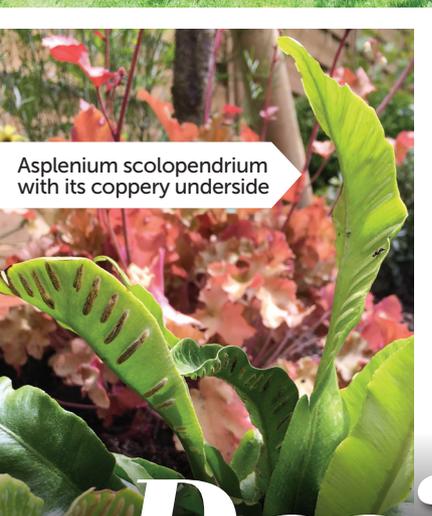




Apricot hues of Geum 'Mai Tai'



Asplenium scolopendrium with its coppery underside



Designer PLANTS

VaRa Garden Design creates key focal points in a garden packed with colour, interesting texture and space to relax

The clients of this wide but shallow plot in Essex were about to embark on a kitchen extension which was going to encroach on the garden. The design brief was to ensure that the clients could continue to enjoy their outdoor space, without it feeling smaller, and that the views from their garden-facing rooms could be enhanced all year round with colour and texture.

On the first visit, the client's magnificent apple tree certainly took centre stage. VaRa Garden Design took inspiration from its beautiful canopy and created a hard landscaping area with soft edges and details to draw the eye away from the brick and fence boundaries.

Curved planting beds cut into the lawn also serve to make the garden feel deeper by allowing a layering of plants from one bed to another.

Bespoke arches now frame the view of the garden and provide a lovely walkway between seating perches, over which fragrant *Rosa* 'New Dawn' and jasmine grow. The arches, as well as the two newly-planted trees, help to balance the height of the established apple tree and the borrowed canopies of neighbouring trees. All the planting beds are linked with differing sizes of box balls, which again echo the curves in the ground plan and tree canopies.

The clients wanted lots of places in which to sit, so VaRa Garden Design created small terraces for sun or shade close to key focal points such as the tree specimens *Acer griseum* and *Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis' or the bespoke water feature.

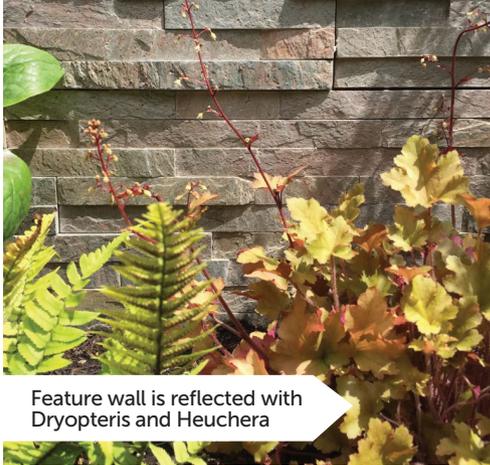
The shadier terrace's shimmering feature wall of copper slate is reflected in the light shades of *Heuchera* 'Marmalade' and *Dryopteris erythrosora* which are planted in front of it.

A soft apricot colour palette also runs through the rest of the planting, softening the evergreen structure, in the form of box balls, ferns, and *Bergenia* 'Eroica', whose repetition draws your eye around the garden.



Hydrangea 'Pink Annabelle'

The clients spend a lot of the year travelling back and forth between their home in England and their Italian olive mill house, so installing irrigation was essential to help



Feature wall is reflected with *Dryopteris* and *Heuchera*



Lofty *Verbascum* 'Cotswold Queen'



NURTURE

Acer griseum's coppery bark catches the light in a shady corner

Plant list

Trees

- *Acer griseum*
- *Prunus x subhirtella* 'Autumnalis'

Shrubs

- *Buxus sempervirens* balls
- *Choisya x dewitteana*
- *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata'
- *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Pink Annabelle'

Herbaceous

- *Allium sphaerocephalon*
- *Anemone x hybrida* 'Serenade'
- *Astrantia major* 'Lars'
- *Coreopsis verticillata* 'Moonbeam'
- *Erysimum* 'Bowles's Mauve'
- *Euphorbia robbiae*
- *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'Spessart'
- *Geum* 'Mai Tai'
- *Helleborus orientalis* 'Pretty Ellen Pink'
- *Heuchera* 'Marmalade'
- *Verbascum* 'Cotswold Queen'

Ferns

- *Asplenium scolopendrium*
- *Dryopteris erythrosora*

Climbers

- *Clematis armandii*
- *Clematis urophylla* 'Winter Beauty'
- *Rosa* 'New Dawn'
- *Trachelospermum jasminoides*

Grasses

- *Deschampsia cespitosa*

Ground cover

- *Bergenia* 'Eroica'
- *Epimedium x versicolor* 'Sulphureum'



the plants get established and to ensure they receive enough water when they are away.

Each season has something to look forward to – lofty *Allium sphaerocephalon*, *Verbascum* 'Cotswold Queen' and *Anemone x hybrida* 'Serenade' provide height and movement, long-flowering perennials such as *Coreopsis* 'Moonbeam' and *Astrantia major* 'Lars' bring further colour to the central beds, with flowers and seed heads poking through *Deschampsia cespitosa* long after summer flowering.

VaRa Garden Design also chose plants with winter seed heads like *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Pink Annabelle'. Spring fragrance is provided by *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata' and *Helleborus orientalis* 'Pretty Ellen Pink' offers its lovely faded bracts to extend the seasons and draw their clients out into the garden.

It can be difficult to plant for the entire year's interest in any one given month – especially in

the summer, so VaRa Garden Design has recently returned to the garden to plant bags of *Tulipa* 'Spring Green' to provide a pop of spring colour. This provided a happy excuse to see how the newly planted scheme was developing as the year progresses.

Plants were sourced from Europlants, Rochford Nurseries and Premier Plants UK Ltd, while the garden was built by Rococo Landscapes

ABOUT VARA GARDEN DESIGN

VaRa Garden Design is an award-winning collaboration between garden designers Vanessa Hoch and Rachel Pocock – both members of the SGD and APL. They have created show gardens at Hampton Court and enjoy taking on projects in Hertfordshire, London and the surrounding areas.

www.varagardendesign.co.uk