

# DIVIDE AND CONQUER

## VARA GARDEN DESIGN

A domestic garden is dramatically transformed into a selection of entertaining spaces



1



### PROJECT DETAILS

Project value  
**£35k**

Build time  
**Three months**

Size of project  
**196m<sup>2</sup>**



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The client approached VaRa Garden Design after they had been impressed with its show garden at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2015. Having finished decorating the interior of the house, they wanted a fresh contemporary feel for their garden. The brief was to design a relatively low maintenance garden that would allow easy access from the house, increasing the amount of hard landscaping throughout. The client also wanted the design to include changes of level that incorporated a water feature.

### Design and build

The existing west-facing garden was on a wide plot, with good privacy on all sides but little usable space for entertaining on its narrow patio. Prior to the build, the site sloped down away from house, and also from left to right. Fortunately, there was easy access to the side of the property for the build. The brick-built garage

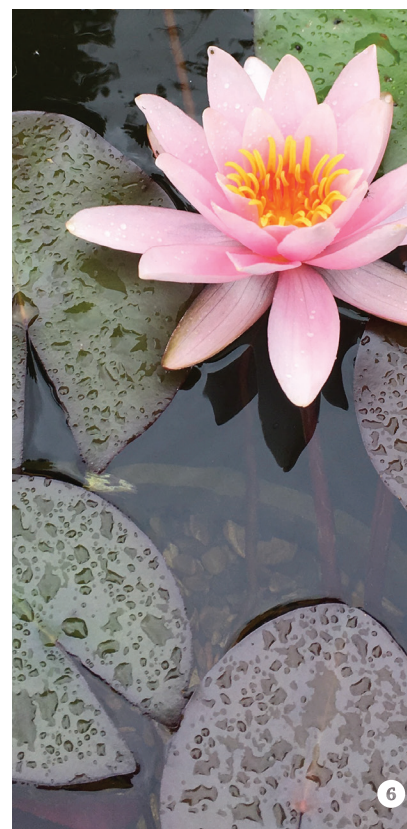
and garden shed were to remain on the left, and the fence was in good order, so was painted to provide a better backdrop for the new planting and pots.

The design needed to lift and increase the patio area while reducing the size of the lawn area, incorporating raised beds and changes of level with access steps. The planting was key; the garden could be viewed from most of the downstairs living space at all times, so it needed to provide year-round structure, colour and interest for wildlife, and link the different areas of the new design.

The challenge for VaRa Garden Design was to keep the look of the garden contemporary, while making it a welcoming and inviting space. Materials were suggested and samples ordered so that everything could be viewed together with the owners, to see how it would work in the scheme. A blue-grey granite was the clients' favourite option for the patio and steps, softened by the use of wooden sleepers for the

raised beds, floating bench and step risers. A 20mm pea shingle with larger complementary pebbles was used not only for the gravel area at the bottom of the garden, but also as a border to the lawn, helping to link the different parts of the garden together. The chosen colour of the render for the water feature provided a lovely foil for the plants, and was a lighter shade of the colour used for the fences.

In terms of the ground design, the garden was divided and levelled into three sections that were connected by wide generous steps, angled on opposite sides of the middle terrace. The patio level was extended in depth, and the first wraparound planting bed was kept at this height, too. Grasses, structural green cubes and evergreen planting for constant interest were echoed in planting beds throughout the garden. Pots added greenery to the patio, connecting the house and terrace to the rest of the space, and defined where the first of the water feature pools started, level with the patio. Here, a deep



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square pool was created, feeding into a lower L-shaped pool via a wide copper spout that was designed by the clients themselves.

The second level was laid up to a small lawn with paved stepping stones leading off from the main steps, hugged on opposite sides by a retaining sleeper wall and a rendered water feature wall. Both walls offer seating opportunities for enjoying this area of the garden, with further interest at this level coming from a beautifully lit corten steel sculpture.

Stepping stones laid into the gravel lead to a smaller courtyard, providing an alternative sunny or shady spot to the main patio seating →

- 1 View through summer Verbena and bronze lantern
- 2 Lower patio set amongst gravel and planting
- 3 Bespoke water feature lit at night
- 4 Copper lights draw the eye to key features
- 5 Layers of planting are revealed at each garden level
- 6 Delicate water lilies established in two months
- 7 Sleek stone softened by timber, gravel and water



area, depending on the time of day. Trees, large pots and planting in the gravel together add height, interest and scale to this lower area.

Planting throughout mixes structural elements with seasonal 'pops' of colour. There are warm pinks and burgundies, with lime greens providing contrast. Sunny and shady areas of the garden are linked by similar styles, colours and textures, while predominantly evergreen climbers soften all the vertical boundaries around the garden.

At the end of the whole process, the clients commented: "We have been very impressed throughout the design process with your attention to detail and enthusiastic, imaginative ideas, while always bearing in mind our opinions and the available budget. We are thrilled with the new garden you have designed for us, and have thoroughly enjoyed our collaboration over these months."

#### ABOUT VARA GARDEN DESIGN

VaRa Garden Design is a collaboration between Vanessa Hoch and Rachel Pocock, whose first garden together won a Silver-Gilt medal at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2015. They enjoy working closely with the client to ensure the brief is implemented, offering creative solutions while maintaining good design principles.

**VaRa Garden Design**

[www.varagardendesign.co.uk](http://www.varagardendesign.co.uk)

#### REFERENCES

Design and planting  
**VaRa Garden Design**  
[www.varagardendesign.co.uk](http://www.varagardendesign.co.uk)

Build  
**Rococo Landscaping & Building**  
[www.rococo-uk.com](http://www.rococo-uk.com)

Patio and stepping stones  
(Blue-Grey Granite)  
**London Stone**  
[www.londonstone.co.uk](http://www.londonstone.co.uk)

Gravel and pebbles  
**Ridgeons**  
[www.ridgeons.co.uk](http://www.ridgeons.co.uk)

Softwood sleepers, render, plastering sand, cement, lime, SBR and beads  
**H Butterfield Ltd**  
[www.hbutterfield.co.uk](http://www.hbutterfield.co.uk)

Plants  
**Provender Nurseries**  
[www.provendernurseries.co.uk](http://www.provendernurseries.co.uk)  
**Rochfords**  
[www.rochfords.net](http://www.rochfords.net)

Trees (multi-stemmed Amelanchier and Sorbus aucuparia standard)  
**Barchams**  
[www.barcham.co.uk](http://www.barcham.co.uk)

Copper spout  
**Designed by client**

Pots  
**The Pot Company**  
[www.thepotco.com](http://www.thepotco.com)

Sculpture  
**John Lewis**  
[www.johnlewis.com](http://www.johnlewis.com)

Fence paint (exterior paint for wood in 'Anthracite')  
**Dulux**  
[www.dulux.co.uk](http://www.dulux.co.uk)

Trellis  
**Ridgeons Timber & Builders Merchant**  
[www.ridgeons.co.uk](http://www.ridgeons.co.uk)

Turf  
**George Davis Turf**  
[www.georgedaviesturf.co.uk](http://www.georgedaviesturf.co.uk)

Lighting  
**Chris Wells, UCS Electrical**  
[sparkychris@live.com](mailto:sparkychris@live.com)

Irrigation  
**Client installed**  
Tables and seating  
**Client's own**



**BEFORE**



**DURING**



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