

Light & Shade

CELEBRATED GARDEN DESIGNER **CHARLOTTE ROWE**
LEAFS THROUGH HER BACK CATALOGUE
OF STRIKING OUTDOOR DESIGNS

Bridges and Screens in Notting Hill

This mid-19th century town house in Notting Hill Gate is tall, extending over a number of floors, while the garden is long and quite narrow. It was important that any design for the garden pushed out the side boundaries and – due to the height of the house – that the garden looked good from above as well as from within the space itself.

The house was being completely refurbished and the client was keen to have a garden that complemented the work being carried out to the interior of the house. The brief was to have a contemporary, low maintenance garden with strong architectural lines, a simple classic colour palette, good quality pale paving and lush, predominantly evergreen, planting. It had to have all-year round interest and look really good from the upper floors of the house.

A water feature was discussed and finally agreed on and good lighting and some screening was essential, particularly to the north where the garden is somewhat overlooked. It was also agreed that some integrated seating was included along with some storage.

Two final challenges were that access to the garden was from two floors, the lower ground floor and the mezzanine floor via two large staircases. Therefore, the first design decision was to bring down the level of the garden by around half a metre so that the access and the view of the garden from the lower ground floor was improved. This involved totally redesigning and building two new staircases into the garden and underpinning the boundary walls. The result was a more cohesive space which felt more accessible from both levels.

A 10-metre-long water feature with two letterbox-style water chutes was designed to run the length of the garden, creating a really strong visual feature from the lower ground floor up to the top floor of the house.

Another major design decision was to combine beautiful, pale, Portuguese limestone paving with warm western red cedar 'pontoons' which span the garden and the water rill in two places, breaking up the space and creating an illusion of breadth. To complement the timber 'pontoons', horizontal trellis made of cedar has been chased around the old stock brick walls bringing the whole garden within a clearly defined design space.

Three multi-stemmed *Amelanchier lamarckii*, two of them growing through the timber bridges, provide height and seasonal focus, while a floating hedge of pleached *Carpinus betulus* at the end of the garden provides some screening. The planting is rhythmic and simple with a rich mix of perennials and shrubs in a palette of deep greens, creams and deep blues. Signature plants include *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle', *Sollya heterophylla*, *Geranium* 'Johnsons Blue', *Phyllostachys* and clipped pyramid *Prunus lusitanica*.

The spectacular lighting designed by Rebecca Weir of Light IQ highlights the rhythm and length of the water feature and dramatically uplifts the hornbeams and *Amelanchier*. Meanwhile, tall, anthracite-coloured containers planted with low clipped box placed on the mezzanine balcony and outside the lower ground floor complete the picture.

