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Outdoors Homes & Property

It's the perfect outside room

Indoors and outdoors merge seamlessly at this chic coach house in Little Venice

WHEN the architect and garden designer have a dialogue from the start, you can expect the best possible results. Case in point is a Victorian coach house in Little Venice, with a sleek, contemporary interior that needed a courtyard garden to complement. Architect Sally Mackereth called in garden designer Chris Moss, and they discussed using the same palette of materials inside and outside, as much as possible. "It's so important

Pattie Barron



that the garden relates to the house, so there is a feeling of unity," says Moss. "For me, the advantage of working this way is huge, both from creative and practical viewpoints."

The garden is just nine metres wide by seven metres. "Whenever I work in a small town garden, I like to introduce several different textures in the space to give it variety," says Moss. He used the same poured concrete finish as the living room floor, so that there is a continuous, seamless sweep from indoors



to outdoors. "You walk on a completely level threshold so there isn't a feeling of being either inside or outside. And one of the entrances to the garden is a huge cantilevered window which opens outwards like a glass canopy, so you can be outside and enjoy the garden – in the rain."

A unique wall that is used both indoors and outdoors is a real tour de force. The veneer is made of Japanese porcelain tiles, laid horizontally, so that, painstakingly built up, they have a wonderful pleated effect. "The wall provides a great horizontal plane that leads the eye out into the garden," explains Moss. "It is expensive, but it gives a really wonderful texture and has the effect of widening the garden. I've added cushions of green box in front of the wall, to make a lively contrast."

At the back of the garden, Moss decided on a wall of slatted cedarwood that provides similar horizontal lines to the pleated wall, then added a clipped hornbeam hedge in front to make a green backdrop, and lend a



Glass canopy: a cantilevered window provides shelter at the entrance

sense of depth to the space. As it is in a conservation area, an existing ash tree had to stay, so Moss built a cedar-



Textural wall: porcelain tiles, built up in layers, create a pleated effect

wood deck around it that creates another level, and added, just beyond it, a green plinth of clipped box that has

Boxing clever: different levels and materials make the space look larger

the same proportions as the house's large chimney. The deck, backed by a wisteria on a pale rendered wall, receives most sun, so it was the ideal spot for table and chairs. These were designed by Mackereth and are made of reconstructed stone that again refers back to the house interior.

Just beyond the deck, a patch of gravel adds a soft texture to contrast with the concrete floor, and is planted with perennials that surround a handsome zinc water trough. "It is a similar metal to the one used on the staircases and in the kitchen, the water provides a reflective element and I like the strong, structural shape. In winter you see the trough clearly, and in summer it is veiled in plants."

Evergreen structure in the town garden is essential, says Moss. "In small gardens you are generally looking out on to the space, so it has to hold its form throughout the year, which is why I used box, horizontally pruned and as cushions, as well as the hornbeam hedge.

"But you can't just use evergreens, so at the front of the cedarwood wall is a line of *Hydrangea paniculata*, along with Japanese anemones, for later flowers. And though the planting area is small around the trough, I designed it so that there is something to please the eye from April to October, with tulips and alliums in spring, followed by white verbascum, aruncus and billowing catmint, *Nepeta racemosa* Walkers Low. *Miscanthus Morning Light*, a white variegated grass, gives a great lightness to the garden, while ferns associate well with water."

NOTEBOOK

- **Chris Moss:** chrismosgardens.com
- **Reconstructed stone table and chairs:** designed by Sally Mackereth and titled Cast 001. They can be commissioned from studiomackereth.com
- **Zinc water trough:** from Domani at The Chelsea Gardener (chelseagardener.com)

See it buy it

See it: Wildflower Workshop

PETERSHAM NURSERIES, Richmond, launched a range of British wildflower seeds last year, and its popularity has inspired an event on creating your own wildflower patch in a border or window box. Resident horticultural expert Thomas Broom will show you what to sow and how to choose from a wide range of wildflowers to provide interest through spring and summer, as well as how to use wildflowers to attract bees, butterflies and other pollinators. You will also discover how to keep your patch blooming from one year to the next. Tickets for the Wildflower Workshop on April 8, from 10.30am to noon, cost £12. Call 020 8940 5230 or email info@petershamnurseries.com.



Buy it: RHS Nerine Collection

ELEGANT Nerine flowers appear on slim stems in autumn, adding late colour to sheltered borders or containers. These bulbous perennials are hardy but need a sunny site, ideally with the protection of a south-facing wall.

The RHS is offering three bulbs of each of the following for £9.99: *Nerine bowdenii*, right, with bright pink flowers; *Nerine bowdenii Ella K*, which has lily-white flowers with softly ruffled petals, and *Nerine bowdenii Ostara*, with pale pink flowers. All three grow to 50cm. The whole collection costs £19.98, saving £9.99, but readers can get an extra 15 per cent off by entering code 300414 online at rhsplants.co.uk. Offer ends midnight April 29.

