



GARDENS  
ILLUSTRATED

# Small Gardens

22 inspiring design and planting ideas  
for small outdoor spaces



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SPECIAL EDITION





## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** Victorian town house with walled garden.  
**Where** Oxford.  
**Soil** Free-draining loam with leaf mould added annually.  
**Size** 100 square metres.  
**Aspect** West-facing.  
**Special features** Contrasting sawn and tumbled York stone pathway and terrace, and a woodland-edge feel to the planting.  
**Designed by** Angus Thompson ([angusthompsondesign.com](http://angusthompsondesign.com)).

**Above** Designer Angus Thompson avoided the long garden feeling like a runway through zoning. The step up to the lawn provides a transition, while the offset areas of planting provide a veil allowing glimpses of the rest of the garden.

**Right** Angus chose materials sympathetic to the Victorian house with honey-coloured York stone used both in cut form and as tumbled setts. These give a contemporary appeal but will also age nicely to add to the patina of the garden.



**Above** Owner Eve Chase loves the fresh spring appeal of a hedgerow. To achieve that here in the garden, signature plants include *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing', with its frothy, white flowers and dark-purple stems, and the fern *Dryopteris erythrosora*.

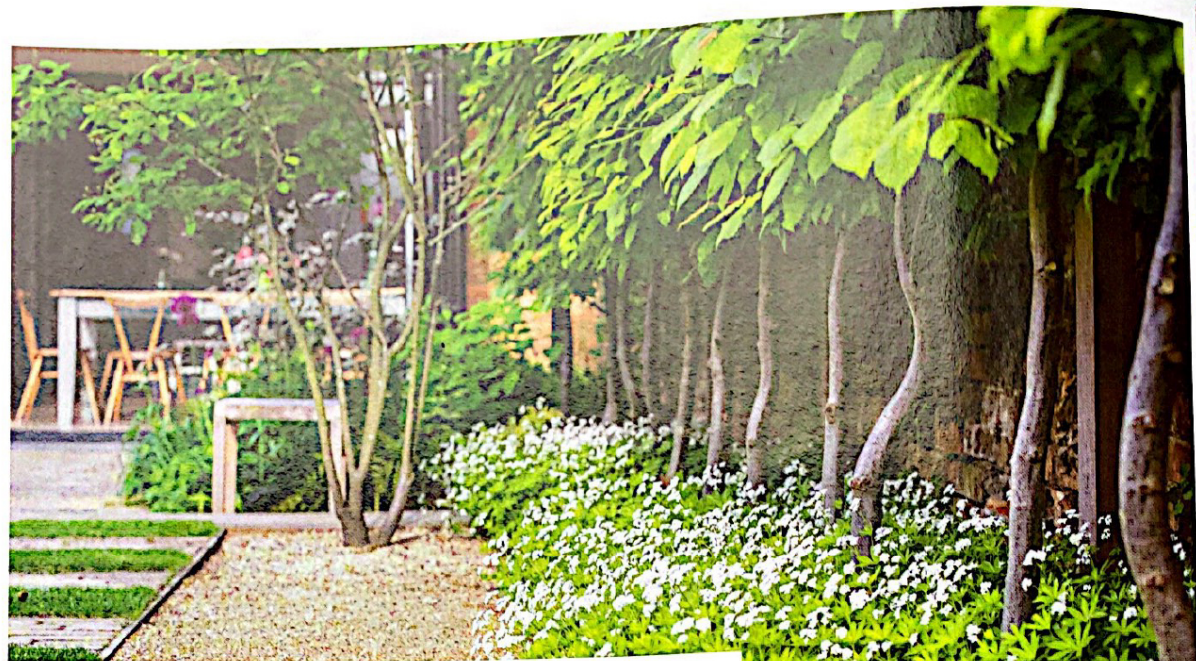
**Left** A naturalised mix of planting with *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' providing the colour theme, picked up by *Verbascum phoeniceum* 'Violetta' and *Cirsium rivulare* 'Atropurpureum'. The scheme is bound together by the grass *Melica altissima* and more anthriscus.

# Sense of space

*Adding character to a small garden is all about careful structure and considered planting – with elements of surprise and intrigue along the way*

WORDS SORREL EVERTON PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

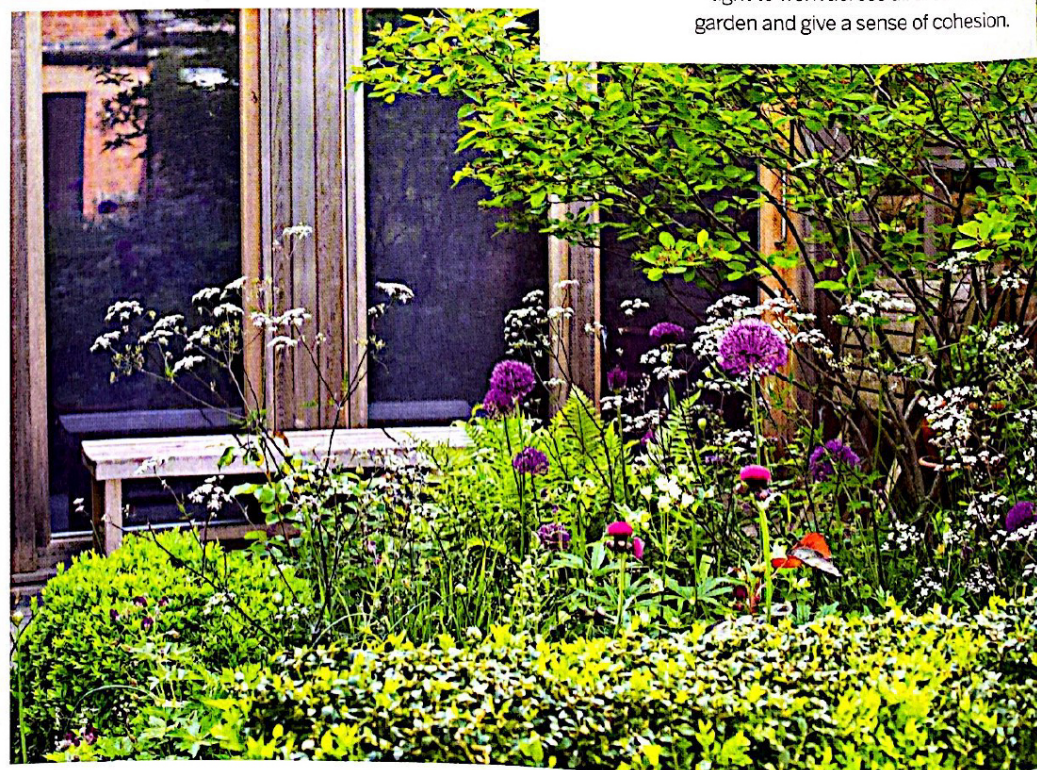




**Above** The groundcover *Galium odoratum* with its white, star-like flowers thrives here on the shadier side of the garden, and is used as underplanting for the pleached hornbeam hedge.

**Left** Angus placed a multi-stemmed *Amelanchier x lamarckii* in the pathway that runs from the house to the studio. This provides both a visual and physical full stop, avoiding that runway feel and allowing for a more varied journey from one area to the next.

**Below** A further area of planting at the back of the garden, including a second *amelanchier*, brings the garden right up to Eve's writing studio. The planting palette was kept deliberately tight to work across all areas of the garden and give a sense of cohesion.



The challenge was to avoid making it too blocky and to allow for a journey from one end of the garden to the other

**T**he smaller a garden space, the harder it has to work, particularly where that space needs to cater for three children and a dog, and include two work studios – while also providing a sense of intimacy and connection with nature and the opportunity to indulge in a love of plants. Eve Chase and family moved from London to this Oxford house. Having put an airy extension on the back of the house, opening it up to the garden – and a studio space at the bottom of the garden divided in two for both Eve and husband Ben – the challenge was to transform a traditional, oblong, suburban plot, complete with an air raid shelter and a lot of rubble, into a garden that would work for everyone.

Local garden designer Angus Thompson took on the challenge. Eve was aware of his award-winning RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden *Nature Ascending*, designed in collaboration with Jane Brockbank, and liked the combination of considered structure with exuberant, frothy planting. "I'm interested first and foremost in space," explains Angus. "And how you can feel affected by the space you are in." The challenge here was to avoid making it too blocky and to allow for a journey from one end of the garden to the other. This, after all, is Eve's daily commute.

"I've included one level change from terrace to lawn and back down to the studios to suggest zoning and a sense of change. It's quite a crisp geometric layout with the planting as a counterpoint that can act as a veil from one section to the next." Angus has also played with the boundaries – on one side it has been left open to borrow the sight of trees beyond, on the other it is more enclosed. The planting is fulsome – thanks to Eve's love of woodland and hedgerow schemes – but kept consistent so no one area of the garden jars visually. "It's a really intimate garden," says Eve. "My daughter loves climbing the loquat tree and my sons like lying on the bench. And I'm constantly tweaking. It's a garden to be in together as a family and we all have aspects that we enjoy."

Eve is a novelist and location often plays as key a role in her books as do the characters. As Eve sits in her writing studio looking out on to her garden, it's not difficult to appreciate just how influential a sense of place is to the unfolding of our daily lives. □

**Above** The loquat tree, *Eriobotrya japonica*, was retained from the original garden. Angus admits that you wouldn't sensibly plant it there, but it was kept for its quirky shape and tree-climbing appeal. "You don't need to see the designer's hand in everything," says Angus. It is underplanted with lavender, enjoying the sunnier side of the garden.