



# How to Design A Small Garden



**SUCCESSFUL  
GARDEN DESIGN**

Step-by-Step Landscaping Ideas, Pictures  
and Plans for Planning the Perfect Small  
Garden by Rachel Mathews





## How to Design a Small Garden - Step-by-Step Landscaping Ideas, Pictures and Plans for Planning the Perfect Small Garden



Courtyard garden at [Casa Aire Guest House](#), Lecrin Valley, Granada, Spain



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So now that's out the way, let's get going with increasing your knowledge about how to design a small garden.

## **Download the Free Small Garden Design Cheat Sheet**

To go along with this Kindle book, I've put together a 'cheat sheet' that summarises the steps to successfully designing a small garden. You can download it and print it off so you don't have to keep referring to the chapter summaries in book. Download it now, here: <http://www.successfulgardendesign.com/amazon-small-garden/>

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## **Introduction**

You have a small garden - that's great, rejoice! Small gardens are wonderful, you can do so much more with them than most other garden types. I know that may sound like an outlandish thing to say but I assure you it's not.

If you're feeling a little sceptical on just how wonderful small gardens are, let me explain.



Large gardens tend to visually need large areas of open empty space so that they don't look too cluttered. Intricate design details tend to get lost in large open areas. In a small garden though, you can often put in a lot more design details because everything is so close at hand.

## LONG MODERN SMALL GARDEN PLAN



Now, as much as I dislike the over-used term 'outside room', for small gardens it is appropriate. So rather than being daunted by designing a small garden, just view it as decorating another room. That subtle shift in mindset will help you tackle it more easily because room decorating is already something you're familiar with and can do.

By the way, for our American readers, when I say 'garden' I mean your whole backyard, not just the plant borders.

### **Can Any Garden Be Made Stunning, No Matter How Small it is?**

In a word, yes. Size actually isn't as important a factor as you may think it is.

The most important part of any garden design, regardless of the size or shape of it, is how you arrange and utilise the space. We'll cover this in detail later but basically you need to create

design shapes that link the entire garden together in a way that makes it look and feel larger and more interesting. In a small garden, this is even more critical to do.

In the rest of this book, I'm going to show you how to utilise every last square inch of space, including vertical space. We'll also look at how to create extra space with different levels as well as ways of using the right building materials to accentuate the space still further.



### **What Constitutes Small Exactly?**

No two human beings have the exact same concept of what small is because everything is relative. A small garden to someone living in a rural area may seem massive to a city dweller with only a few square metres of roof terrace.

So, included in this book is a variety of different size and shape small gardens. If some of the example gardens are larger than your plot, you should still be able to adapt the ideas so to work with the size garden you have.

### **Chapter 1 - The Magic Ingredient to a Great Looking Garden**

The mistake that most people make with their garden is to focus solely on the plants. The plants though, are the very last thing you should think about in your garden.

Yes, I know it goes against everything you know about gardens. In one sense, you're right - gardens ARE about plants. Garden design, however, isn't solely about the plants.

Successful garden design is all about how you utilise the shape and space in the garden. Obviously plants do come into it, but only at the end. Think of it this way, "Plants are the icing on the cake, NOT the cake itself."

### **Why is shape so important?**

I've touched on this briefly in the introduction: the concept of correctly using the space in your garden. Now, at this stage, that might just sound like an awful lot of 'designer babble' and, yes, it is, so let me now explain what on earth it is I'm talking about.

The way you view a garden is basically the route your eyes take as you look at it. If you try to take in the whole garden with one glance, chances are it's going to be quite boring. Ideally, you want to be able to go from one point of interest to another and experience an interesting visual journey. I know that may sound hard to achieve in a really small garden but, don't worry, I'll show you exactly how to do it.

With the right use of the space and the shape, you can control how the garden functions and looks. You can create lots of interest, make the garden feel bigger, and create a sense of movement from one point to another. With really tiny gardens, creating a sense of movement may not be possible but you can certainly make the space look larger and more interesting.

So now that you know just how vital a good design shape is, even in really small gardens, let's now get going with what to do with your garden.

### **Where to Start With Your Garden**

The first thing you need to do is work out exactly what it is you want. If you're muttering under your breath, "A bigger garden!" that's fine; add it to your wish list. The point of the wish list is to find out what you really, really want. Whilst achieving everything may not be possible, you'll be surprised how much you *can* achieve with a few cunning design tricks that I'll show you later on in this book.

You might really want a half-acre plot where you can grow fruit and vegetables and have a secluded seating area for sipping your favourite beverage in. Your actual garden might be only a tenth of that size but that doesn't mean to say you can't achieve all of the things on your wish list, just on a much smaller scale.

The point I want to make here is not to discount what you want just because your garden is small. In the rest of this book, I'm going to show you how to utilise every last square inch of space, and achieve amazing results no matter how small your garden is.

Obviously if swimming pool and tennis court are on your wish list, that may be a tough one to do, but who knows, perhaps a hot tub and table tennis set will work instead!

I want you to allow yourself to fantasise about your dream garden. Let your imagination go and play with it. This is a creative process as well as logical and it's important you allow it to happen. As adults we can often block creative processes with lists of why things can't be done from lack of space, time, budget, expertise constraints to a whole host of other 'can'ts'.

As children we were all creative beings, even if you're silently telling yourself, "I wasn't". Trust me, you were. Designing your garden using nothing but logic will work, but it will be a million times better if you can let your creativity off the leash. To do that you need to do what comes naturally to children - play.

If you're shifting about uncomfortably in your chair now, don't worry, I'm not suggesting you go outside with a bucket and spade and find the nearest sand pit. The play I want you to indulge in is the fantasy world of 'What if I did this'... kids do this all the time. The world in their heads is much more interesting than what is actually around them and that's the creativity I want you to

tap into to.

We will also cover practical and logical design techniques in addition to the 'play' part. A logical approach is as important as the creative one. No point in designing something 'really creative' that can't be constructed or is totally impractical for everyday living.



## Get Inspired

If you have no clue about what you want, it will help to look at some pictures of gardens. So, look through books and magazines and start a folder of gardens you like. Don't limit your choices to the size garden you have. Just collect images that you like. You'll often find that the elements or essences of what you like can be translated into a smaller form.

So, for the time being, just find what you like and make a note of it. There are also some picture galleries on the [ideas page](#) on the Successful Garden Design website you can view.

## Garden Types

Now you've got an idea of what you like, you need to get specific and narrow down precisely what it is that draws you to certain gardens.

Is there a particular garden style that you like eg. modern, formal, cottage, natural, etc?





## **Know What You Want Yet?**

Now, at this stage, please don't worry if you don't know *every last detail* of what you want your finished garden to look like. You may have found that you liked lots of different styles of garden and didn't have a particular 'type' that leapt out and said, "This is the one for me!"

Designing effectively is a bit like cooking. Some people will have a specific result they want to achieve, like a lasagne. They will find out which ingredients they need and then read up on how to put them together to get the desired results. That's all fine and good, and works well.

However, there are those of us that like to do more experimental cooking. We like a lot of ingredients and are willing to mix and match, experiment and play with them a little. Now obviously we need to take a bit of care not to shove every last one of our favourite ingredients into the pot at once - a little restraint is a good thing here - but we can still create a wonderful end result, even if we didn't know precisely what we were aiming for at the beginning.

The experimental cook gets away with their creative meals because they understand the principles of cooking and combining foods. The aim of this book is to give you an equally good understanding of how design works so you can emulate our creative chef's skills with your garden. For those that like to follow recipes, don't panic. The formula I'm going to show you will be step-by-step, just like a recipe, and then you can decide how much you play with it to suit your needs.

## **The Critical Key to Success**

**If you've been skim reading up to now, apply the brakes and read this:** Regardless of the type of garden design you want, there is one thing that will really trip you up if you don't get it right. Not working to scale. I know that may sound terrifyingly technical, but I promise it's not.

A scale plan is just about getting your garden to fit onto a piece of paper in the right proportions. For example, if your tape measure says your left-hand boundary is 5.60m long, then at a metric scale of 1:100 you would draw a line 5.60cm on the paper. The imperial

equivalent of that is  $1/8" = 1'0"$ .

You might think your garden is so small that there's really no point in measuring it, it's a waste of your time putting it on paper properly. **It isn't.** What *will* be a waste of your time (and most likely money) is not working from an accurate scale plan.

In a well-designed garden, EVERYTHING interlinks. If you change one thing, it will have a knock on effect to everything else in the garden. So, if, when you're at the point of building the garden and you have to change something in order to get it to fit, the whole design will be affected (and not usually in a good way).

Working from a scale drawing allows you to check that your ideas will work BEFORE you build them. It takes the guesswork out of the process. If it works on paper it WILL work in real life. Trial and error gardening is an expensive hobby and very rarely brings the desired results.

So think of your garden like a living jigsaw. The size and shape of each piece from your patio or deck to lawn is critical to the success of the overall picture. You (hopefully) wouldn't dream of hacking bits off some jigsaw pieces to 'get it to fit'. The same applies to the elements of your garden design!

OK, I'm nearly done on the importance scale, but there are two last things to mention. One thing that will come to light when you've measured your garden and put it on paper is the shape. You might think that your garden is a perfect square or rectangle but very few actually are. You'll often discover angles that you never knew were there.

So you may well discover that one or several of your boundary fences are at an angle to the house. These will affect your design and needs to be taken into account whilst designing, no matter how subtle and unimportant they may initially appear.

The final thing I want to mention in favour of having your garden plan to scale is it will enable you or your landscape contractor to not only accurately build the garden but also order the correct quantity of materials because you can measure it straight off the drawing, rather than trying to guess how many paving slabs to buy.

I could fill this entire book with the mishaps I've witnessed when people either haven't bothered to measure their garden or have measured it, but incorrectly. I've also had a few mishaps of my own; so I can speak from personal experience here.

When I was 19, before I trained to do this professionally, I designed my first garden (for my brave parents) and I could not be bothered to measure the garden because I was lazy and also didn't know how important it was to do... Let's just say on that one, please don't be as daft/optimistic as that 19-year-old and go get a tape measure already!



## **How to Accurately Survey Your Garden**

Now, as you have a small garden, hopefully it will be pretty easy to measure and won't take you long at all. You can see some free video tutorials on precisely how to measure and draw a scale plan on the Successful Garden Design website: <http://www.successfulgardendesign.com/video-tutorials>

If you prefer written instructions then there's the 'How to Survey Your Garden' available from [Amazon](#) as part of this garden design series. Just change the co.uk to .com or whichever Amazon is in your country.

### ***Chapter 1 Summary:***

*Work out what you want - get inspired and don't limit your ideas at this stage.*

*Measure your garden as accurately as you can.*

*Draw a scale plan of your garden - vital to do if you want good results!*

## **Chapter 2 - How to Design Your Garden**

People often feel stuck with one or several of the following issues with their garden: the size, the shape or the existing layout. Something that might surprise you is that none of those things matter. The garden design formula I will show you works regardless of those things.

In this chapter we're going to look at exactly how design works. Then, later on in the book we'll look at the specifics of how to modify it to work with whatever shape or size of garden you have.

As we've touched upon already, the real key to creating a great looking garden is how you arrange the areas of 'empty' space within it. By empty, I mean the areas you can walk on like deck, patio or lawn etc.

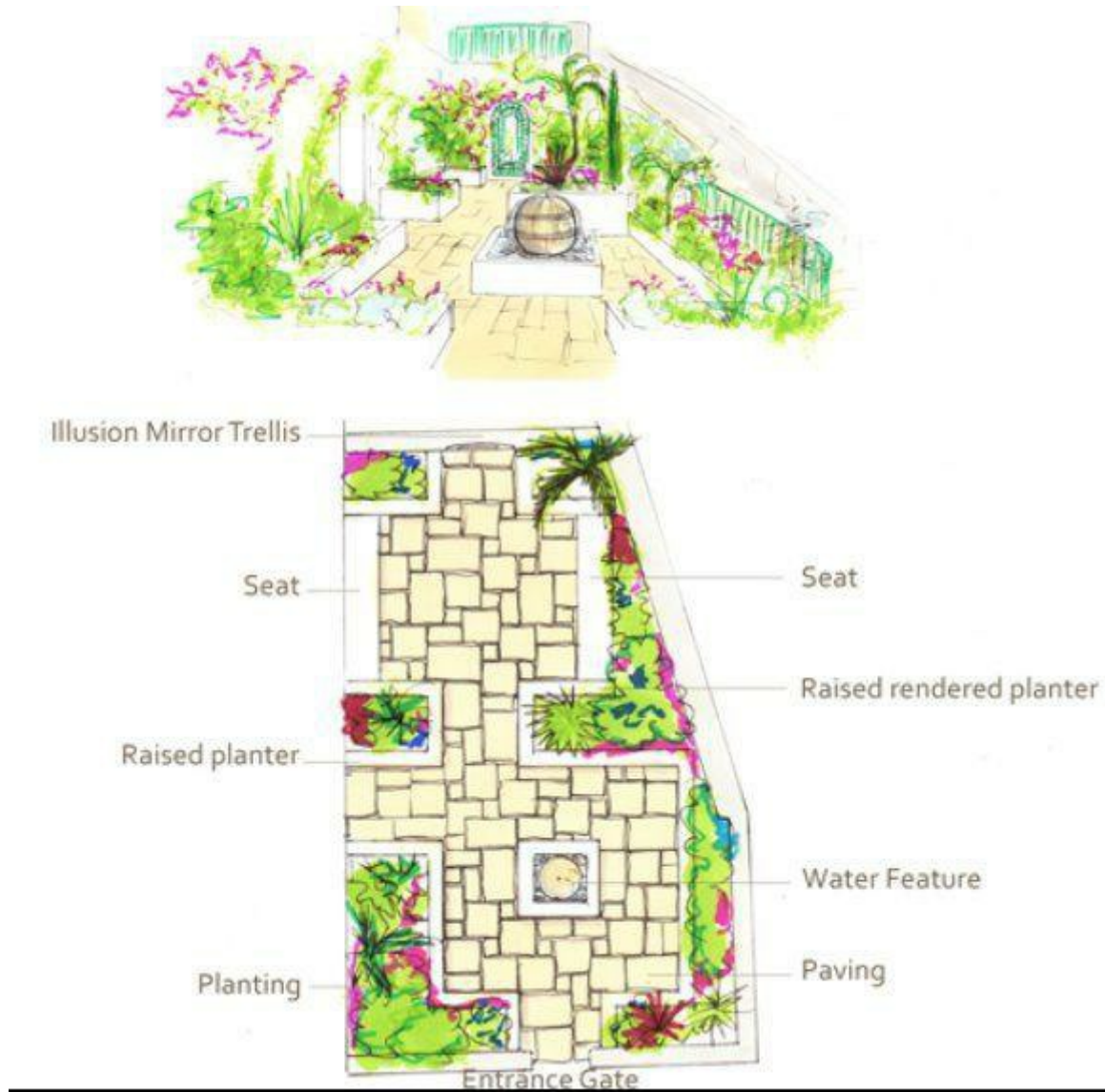
Most people do their gardens the other way round. They start with the 'stuff' like plants and features; then the areas that are left are usually lawn or patio. In order to successfully create a great looking garden you need to shift your thinking 360 degrees and start by shaping the empty bits, then the areas that are left are where your plants and features go.

If you have a fairly established garden and are now wondering how on earth you can start afresh like this, don't worry; we'll cover how you do that as well. Like I said earlier, it really doesn't matter what is in your existing garden now.



So I guess it's now time I prove that and show you precisely what you do need to do...

## The 'Shape First' System

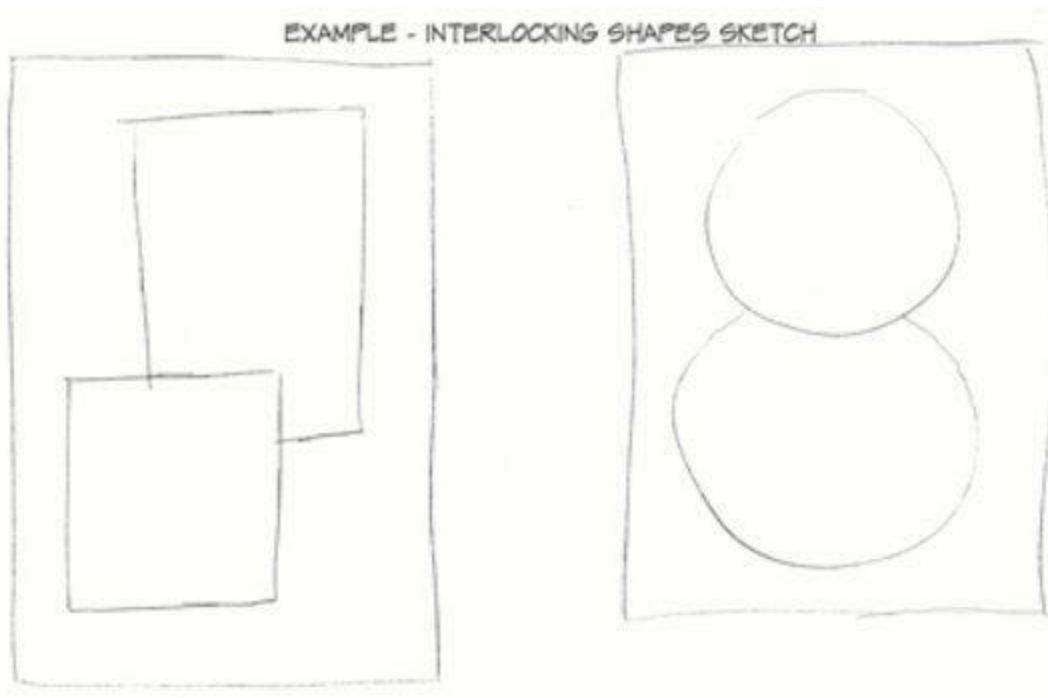


Now I know you are keen to get going with your garden but you'll get much better results if you are prepared to have a few 'test runs' at designing first. So, to really demonstrate how design works I'd like you to grab a sheet of paper and a pencil and follow along...

No need to panic, I promise this will quick and painless and no artistic skill whatsoever required. On your sheet of paper draw a large box shape, either a square or rectangle - no need for it to be perfect. Draw it totally freehand and if it's the worst drawn thing you've ever seen on paper, that's absolutely fine!

For those of you who like to skim-read a book first, then come back and do this type of stuff later, I strongly advise you don't do that this time. **It will be much more effective if you do it now.** Otherwise it's a bit like reading the end of novel first - the carefully constructed plot isn't nearly as effective when you know the ending. Entirely up to you, it's your book after all, but don't say I didn't warn you!

Now in the square or rectangle you've drawn, I want you to draw 2 similar shapes that interlock as shown in the pictures below. The shapes should be really simple, either box shapes or circles - again no precision whatsoever is necessary. Precision at this point is an impairment, not an asset, you'll see why in just a moment.



Now on your shape at the bottom of the paper, write the word 'patio' and on the other shape, write 'lawn'. Then take a look at the spaces that are on the outside of your main shapes; these areas are where you put your plants and features.

If you are looking at your sheet of paper with a horror-stricken face because what you've drawn so far would never make a great design in a million years, don't worry. It's not meant to at this stage. What I want you to see is the reverse process of shaping the space before you even think about putting in plants or a pergola.

So far we've only covered one design principle: Shape. There are layers to a good design. One principle alone does not a good design make. The shape is THE most important one to get right but the other principles make it work properly.

So, let's take what you've done and make it work better by adding another layer into the design process. For those of you that couldn't help yourselves and did the exercise using a ruler, you're now going to see why that wasn't necessary!

## Proportion



When I asked you to draw two interlocking shapes, one thing I did not do was to specify the

size of the shapes. The reason is I want to demonstrate each principle separately and too much information in one go makes things much harder to learn.

Now you've had your first experience of shaping the empty parts first, you're probably already seeing the impact the size of the shapes you've drawn makes.

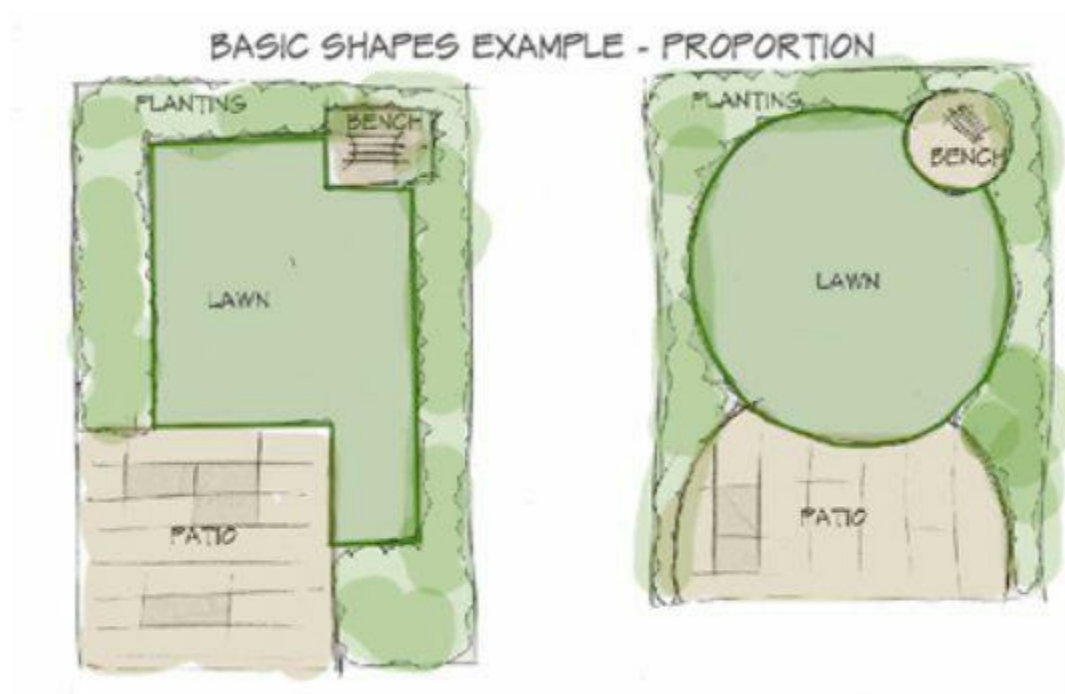
So what I'd like you to do now is to look at the shapes you've drawn, now that they are labelled lawn and patio (if your garden is way too small for a lawn, please still play along as this exercise will still be very relevant to you when you start to design). Now notice how much space is left for the planting.

Are the areas outside your lawn and patio shapes looking too big or too small in relation to the shapes you've drawn?

Don't worry if you can't immediately answer that question, I'll give you a ratio to help you shortly. In the meantime, take an eraser and rub out the first shapes you've drawn and then experiment re-drawing them larger and smaller.

Now look at the drawing again and notice how the larger and smaller size shapes affect the areas on the outside that are left for the plants. Are you getting a better sense of which size worked the best?

Did a particular size look like or 'felt' like it worked better? If you're saying, "Yes, the very first one I drew!" you're a smart Alec, well done, you're a natural when it comes to proportion! For the rest of us, though, it probably took a bit of tinkering with before it looked right.



### What if None of the Sizes Looked Right?

I'm going to give you that ratio I mentioned earlier. Now, this isn't something that is set in stone, which is why I wanted you to experience the effects different sizes make before I let you loose with it. It's not set in stone because different gardens and people have different needs,



which we'll cover later, but this ratio is certainly a good starting point.

As a guide, you need to allow approximately three-quarters empty space to filled areas. So your lawn, patio, deck and open areas of gravel should take up approximately three-quarters of your garden, the rest should be filled with plants and features.

We'll talk about manipulating that ratio to suit your needs later on when we look at small garden design tricks in chapter 4.

### **One Last Important Part to Proportion**

As well as the proportion of the overall size of your garden, each feature you add must also be in proportion to everything around it and in proportion to the people that use the garden.

For example, if you have a pergola, you need to make sure that it not only looks good in proportion with the garden but it also has to work with you. If you are six feet tall (1.80m) and the pergola is six-and-a-half feet tall, it's going to feel very uncomfortable to walk under, especially when the plants start to hang down from the beams.

If you make the pergola seven feet high, you also need to make sure it's wide enough to take the height. For example, a pergola or archway that is three feet wide (1m) and seven feet tall (2.10m) would look too tall and skinny. Whereas a width of four to five feet (1.20-1.50m) would look more in proportion to the height. So bear this type of proportion in mind when adding any vertical features to your design.



### **How to Give an Existing Garden a Makeover**

It's all well and good showing you how to shape the space when a garden is virtually empty, but what about gardens that do have existing plants and features?

If you are keeping your patio area and lots of plants in borders that are well established, but somehow the garden just doesn't seem to work as well as you'd hoped, then what?

Well, the good news is everything you have learnt thus far is relevant; you just have a few more things to manoeuvre around.

## The Key To A Successful Makeover

In order for a garden to work well, it has to work as one whole unit. If you remember back to our very first design principle, Shape, we discussed the importance of viewing the garden as a whole entity. This is critical for any design. Just because you have existing elements in your garden doesn't mean they should be in any way separate from the changes you make as the garden develops.

Survey the garden and draw up a scale plan. Then, once you have everything plotted onto paper and can see an aerial view of the garden, take a look at the empty spaces.

Are there clearly defined spaces, or an irregular smattering of plants and features dotted about? If you have lots of things dotted about without much clarity, you have half the answer. What you need to do is to work out how to bring clarity and balance into the garden.

You may see what needs to be done the moment you put it on paper. If that isn't the case, try to detach from what is there now. Don't think about all your favourite plants in the border on the right hand side that you do not want to touch.

Be objective - is what is there on the paper working? And if not, why not? You need to be honest with yourself first, then work out what you can do. If you are totally against moving something, that's fine. Just because something isn't working, doesn't necessarily mean you have to move it; re-shaping and linking into other features often works well.

There are occasions when something simply is in the wrong place. Then it comes down to a judgement call; can and do you want to live with whatever the 'it' is that's in the wrong place?

The example shown below is a simple makeover. The patio and main shrub borders have stayed in place. The lawn has been shaped and has a brick edge to define the shape. One shrub border has been trimmed back a bit on the right hand side.



A few stepping-stones link the patio to the newly shaped lawn and a bench has been added as a focal point in front of the large shrub border on the top left.

At a later date, the patio could be re-done and perhaps a semi-circle shape could be cut into the lawn to add more interest and shape. But for a makeover, which has only involved re-shaping the lawn, removing a few shrubs and adding some features, it's totally transformed the look and feel of the garden.

It really can be as simple as re-shaping your lawn and borders that can create a dramatic improvement to how your garden looks. It's easy to underestimate just how important shaping the space is, it really does account for 60% of garden design success, if not more.

The modern courtyard garden plan below shows how simple box shapes have created the design. The areas that are left either side of the boxes are where the plants go. In this garden, added interest, is created by making the left-over shapes raised planters.







OK, what's next? Well, you now know the first two big heavyweight hitters of garden design, 'Shape' and 'Proportion'. There's a third big bruiser called 'Movement' that will be your bestest buddy when it comes to making your small garden look and feel wider and longer.

The next chapter will demonstrate 'Movement' in action with a selection of small garden plans. The designs will also be 'de-constructed' so you can see the underlying shapes and how they affect the perception of space and create movement.

### ***Chapter 2 Summary:***

*Practice designing with shapes first. Use simple geometric shapes for the lawn / patio / decking & gravel areas.*

*Then get the proportion right with your design shapes - approx 3/4 'empty' space to plants and features.*

*Interlink shapes like boxes or circles, experiment with different sizes & see how it impacts the space.*

### **Chapter 3 - Designing Different Shape Gardens**

The overall shape of your garden isn't as important as you think it is. However, what you do with that shape is. What I mean by that is don't feel limited by the overall shape of your garden, it's not an issue. If it's long and narrow, we can make it look and feel wider. If it's short and wide, we can make it look and feel longer. What's important is how we go about doing those things.

In the last chapter I mentioned how important movement is to creating a great garden, and it's especially vital in a small space. So what exactly do I mean by movement? Well, it simply means a way of using shapes and key features so that your eyes journey down the garden in a certain way, from one point of interest to another. This visual 'journey' can make a garden feel a lot larger because you're not taking in the entire garden with one glance.





garden.

## Long Narrow Garden Plans



This small garden looks much larger because the paving pattern and careful use of rectangular 'boxes' in the design trick the eyes into thinking there's more width and length in the garden.



## LONG MODERN SMALL GARDEN PLAN



## GARDEN BEFORE LANDSCAPING



This small, modern town garden needed to look both wider and longer because it is viewed from two different aspects from the house. This was achieved with the use of carefully positioned rectangles of decking and paving. The direction of the decking made the garden look longer and the paving made it look and feel wider because of the direction the slabs were laid (this trick will be covered in more detail later).

The raised rendered planters add height and interest and prevent the entire garden from being viewed in one go which also increases the sense of space. The built-in seating also functions as storage boxes with the deck slats on hinges for easy access.

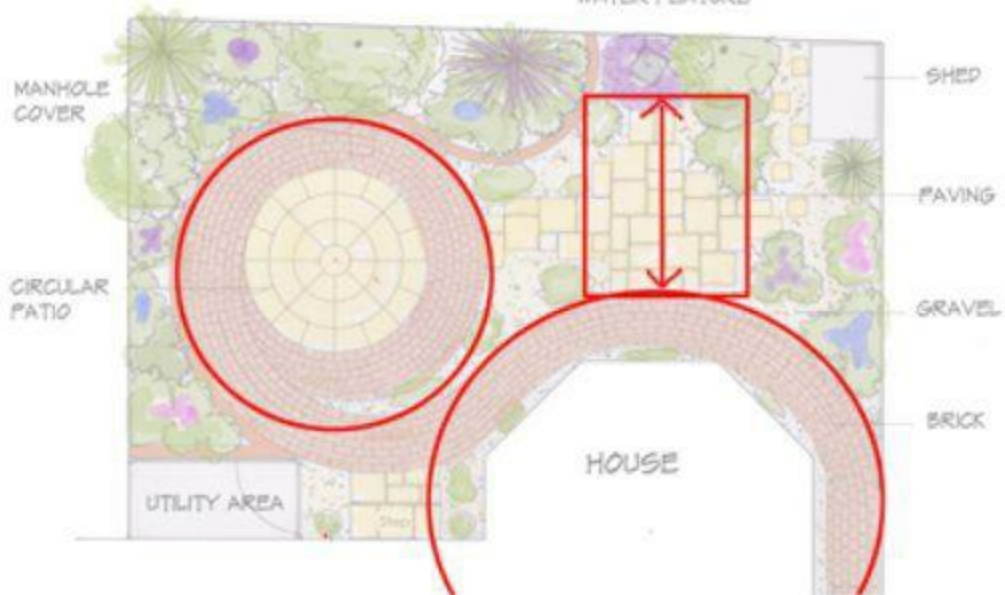
## Wide Garden Plans



WATER FEATURE



WATER FEATURE



With wide gardens it's important to try to make the garden look longer. If there's room, dividing the space in two sections will help achieve that, especially if you draw the eye to focal points at the end of the garden.

The curved path in the example garden above also helps to draw the eye round the garden, this visual journey makes the space feel larger.

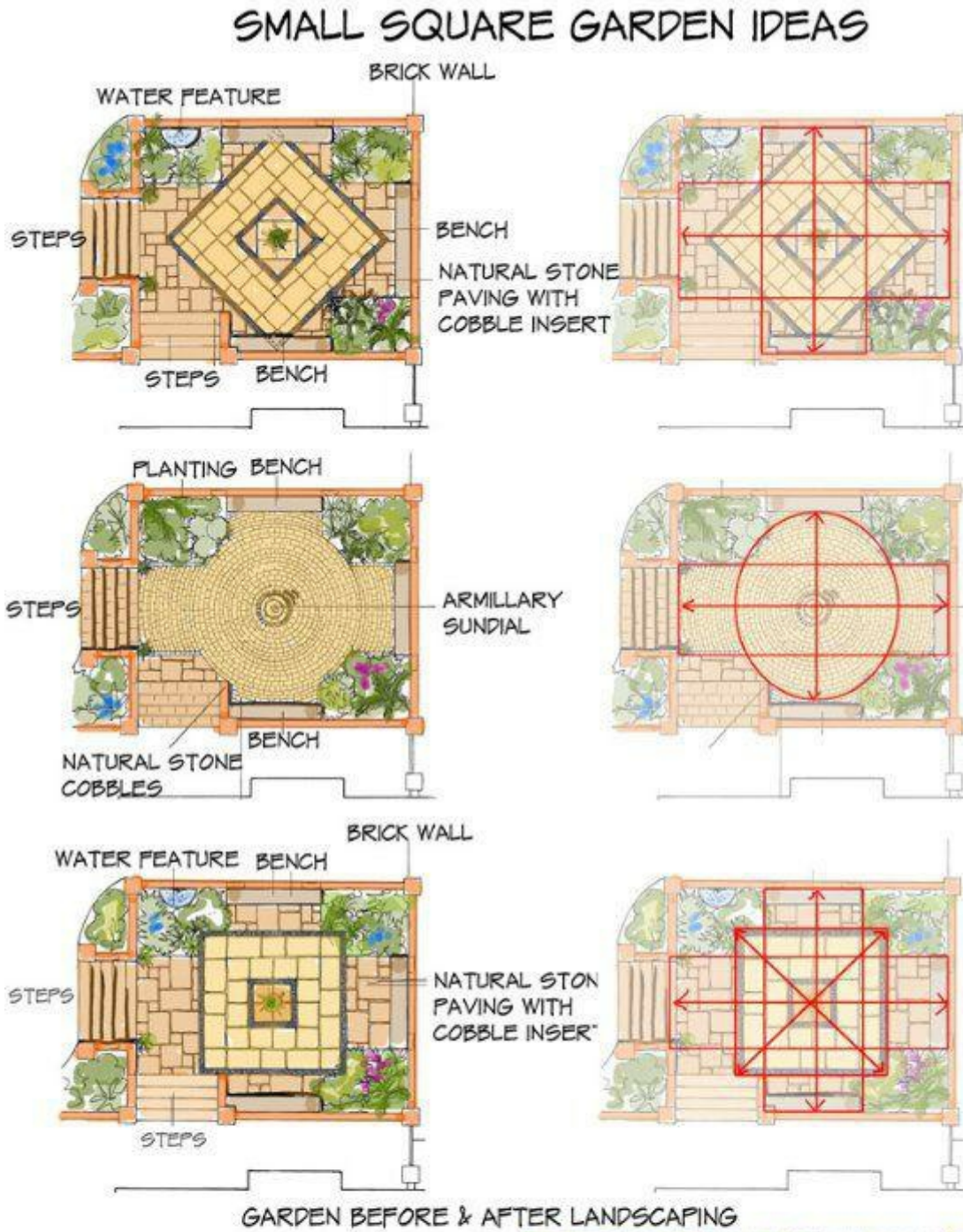


The example garden above has very strong paving lines. The darker cobble boxes draw the



eyes out into the garden away from the house, which help make the area look longer.

## Square Garden Plans



The three designs for a very small, square, courtyard garden visually do the same thing. Each design shape draws the eyes through the garden but also from side to side, which makes the space look bigger. The mix of materials also helps trick the eyes into assuming the area is larger than it actually is.

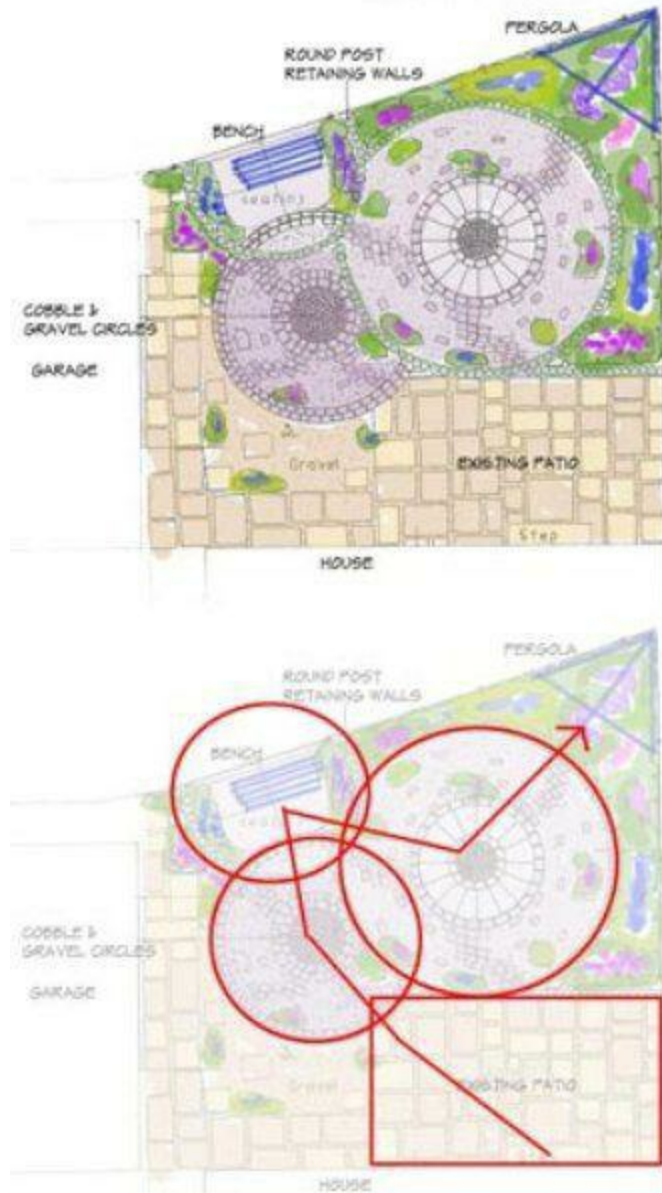


This small courtyard garden is made to look and feel larger by using a dominant paving pattern and large mirror framed with trellis. The paving pattern makes the garden look longer and wider and the large mirror reflects the pool and garden making it look twice the original size.

### **Awkward + L shaped Garden Plans**



## SMALL GARDEN PLAN



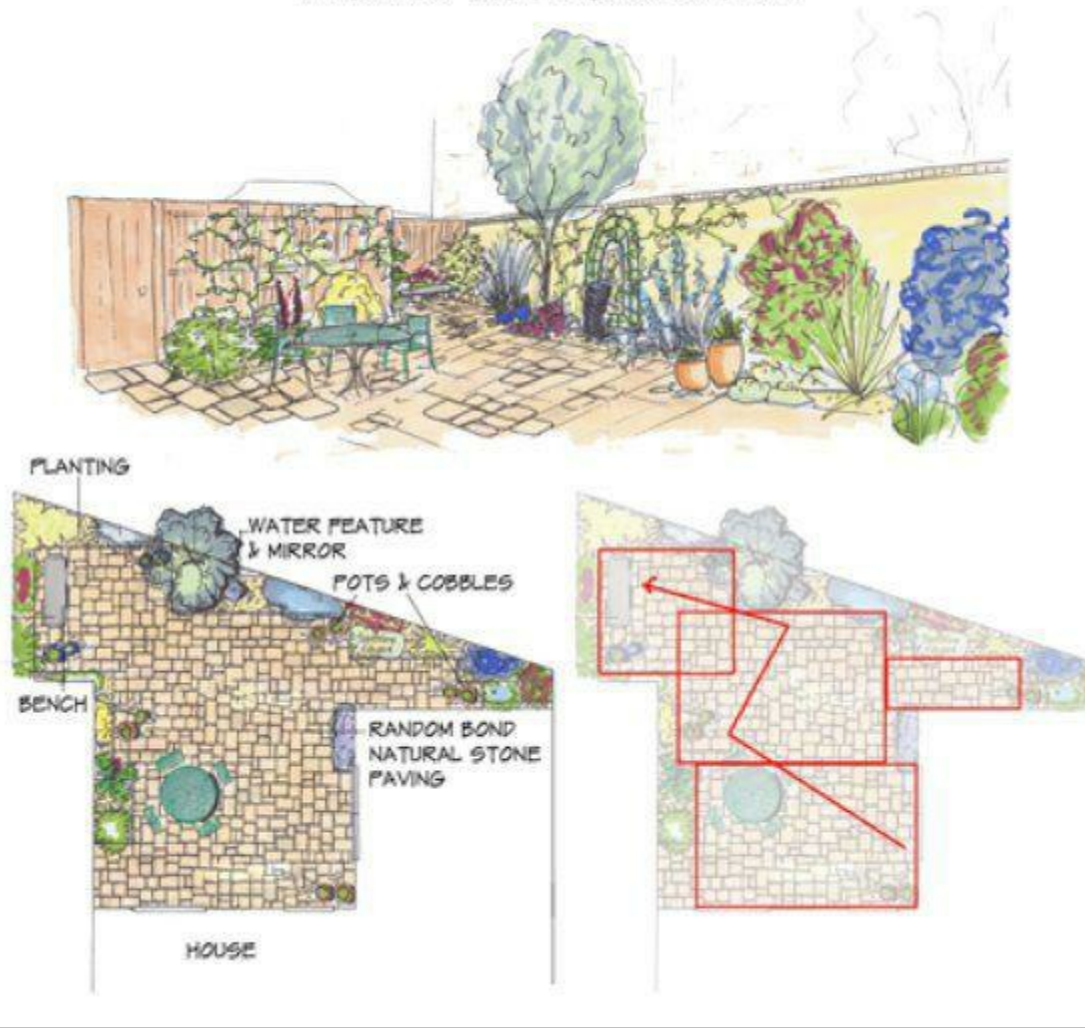
## GARDEN LANDSCAPING



This small garden uses circles to make the space look larger and lead the eye round the garden. The circle shapes also help to hide the awkward angles of the garden and add interest with the level changes. The cobbles laid in a dispersed pattern around a paving circle also create interest.



## AWKWARD SHAPE GARDEN PLAN



The small random bond paving helps make this small garden look much larger. A mirror and water feature are the main focal point, drawing the eyes down the garden, then across to the bench in the far corner.

Pots add colour and interest and help break up the paving. The planting spills out across the paving and will become quite 'jungly' over time.

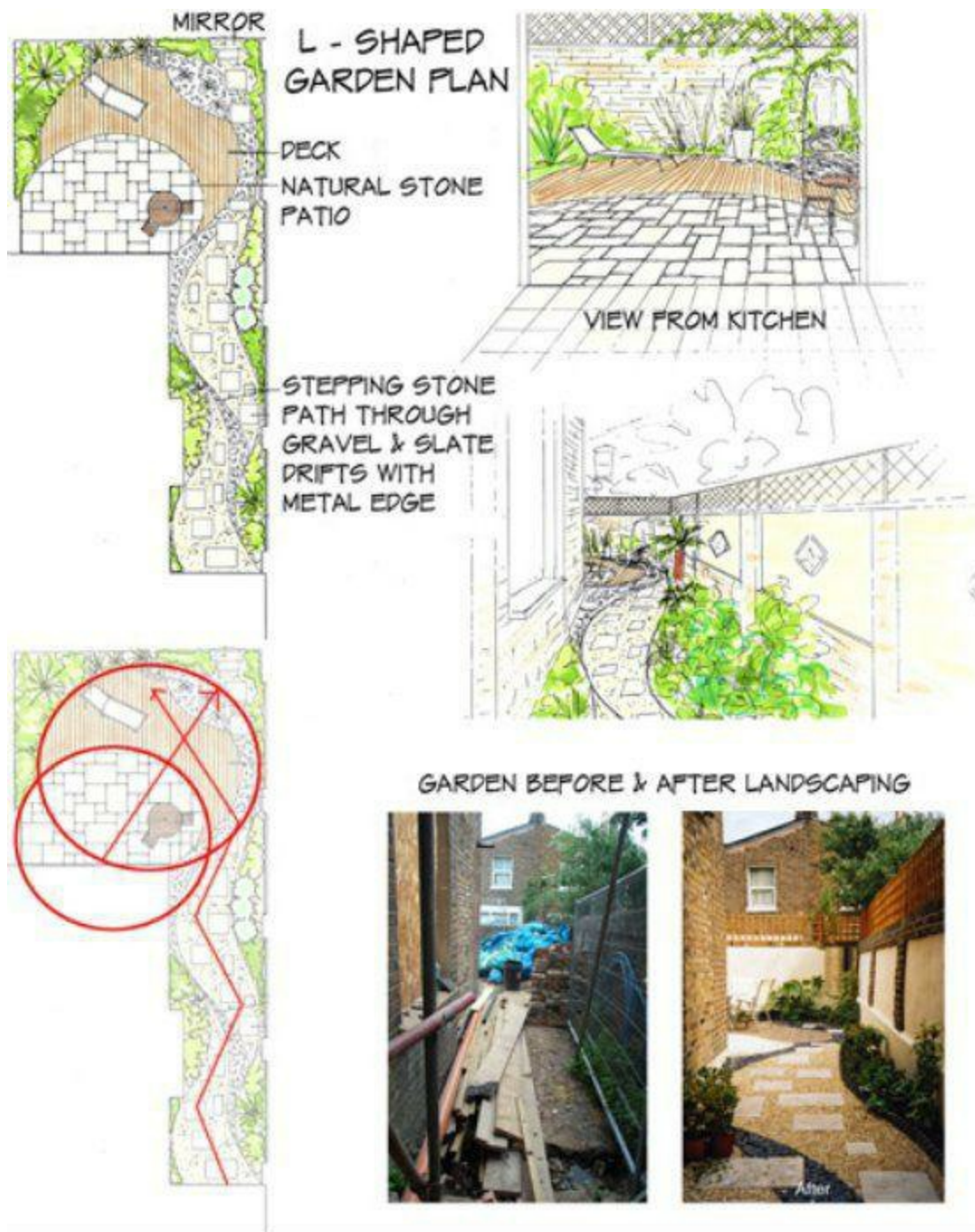
## AWKWARD SHAPE GARDEN PLAN



Circles are very useful to help disguise awkward angles in gardens. They take your eyes away from the angles and visually lead you around the circular shape away from any awkward angles.

The decking contrasts with the paving to create added interest and tie in with the wooden staircase to the back gate. Adding a white render to the enormous brick wall reflects a lot of light back into the garden, making it feel more spacious. Finally, a mirror at the end reflects back some of the garden planting, adding an extra dimension to the garden.

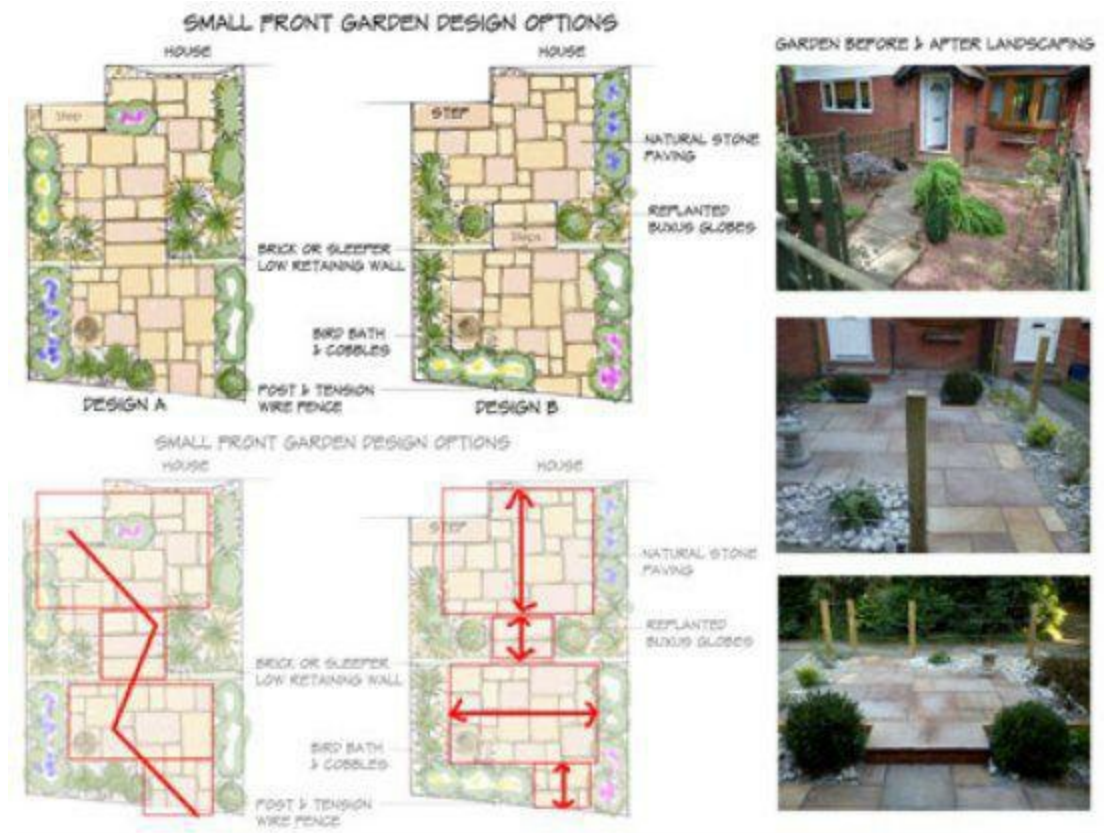




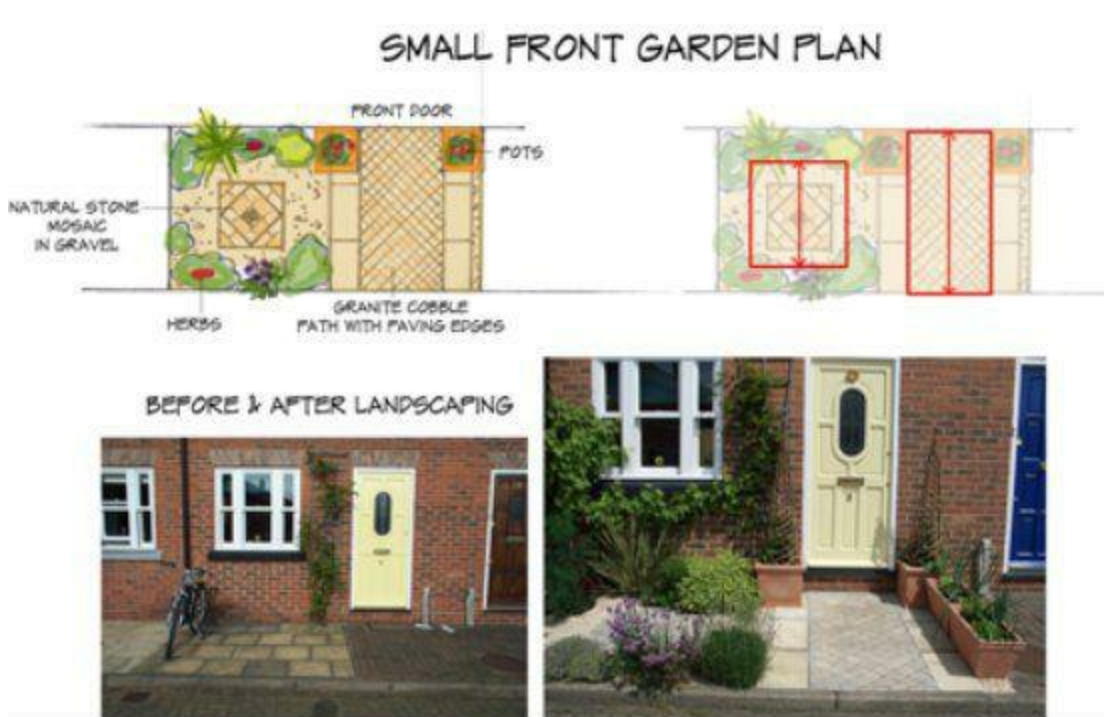
The meandering path takes the eyes from side to side of the narrow passageway and the mix of materials and rendering the lower section of the wall makes the space feel lighter and look wider. The circular shaped patio and deck also help make the garden look larger along with the mirror reflecting back the garden at the end.

### Small Front Gardens





This small front garden has two similar design options. Design B has fractionally more paving (which is the one that was chosen). The client wanted a very low maintenance garden and to terrace it rather than have the original slope.

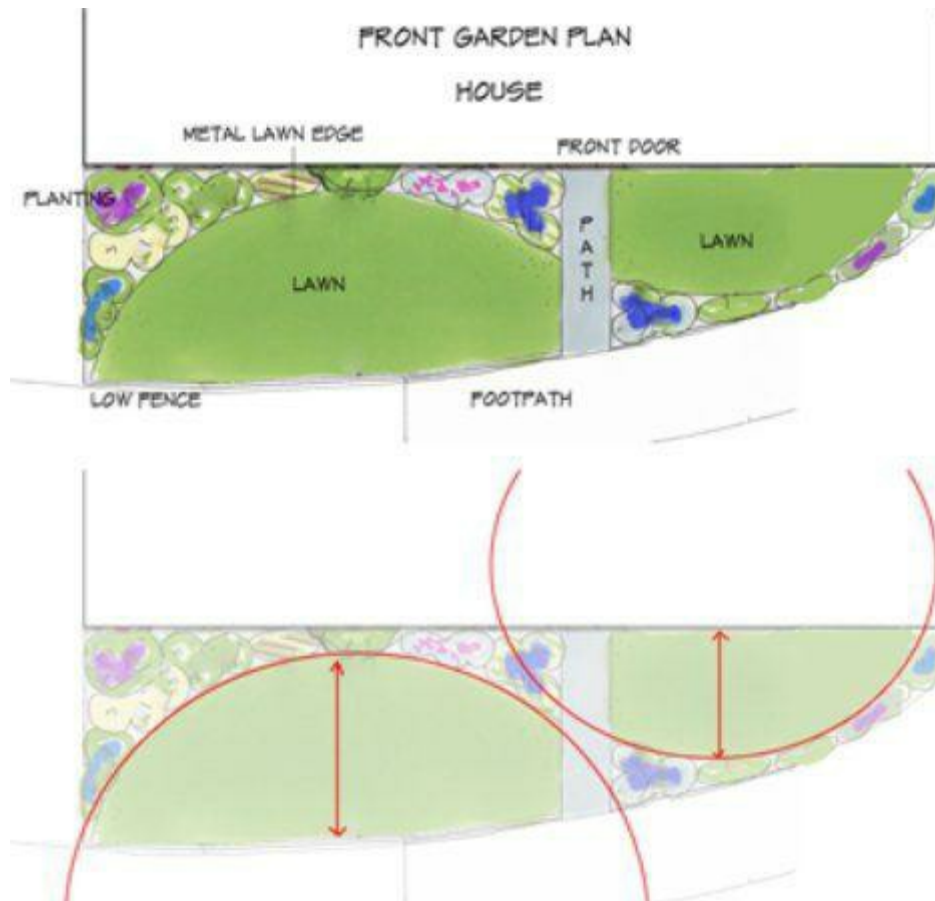


This was the front garden of my first house. I used leftover landscaping materials and bought some nice gravel and a few herbs and vegetable planters, job done in a day.

The centrepiece the herbs were planted around was a square mosaic design created from similar cobbles to the path. Using similar small size materials has made the area look much

larger as has laying the cobbles at an angle.

The sweet red grape vine was trained up the house and runner beans grew up the obelisks either side of the front door. The tubs provided a constant supply of lettuce with occasional onions and the best carrots I've ever grown. Fresh herbs were always on supply, for such a small space it was very productive.



This front garden was a very simple design based on two semi-circles. The shapes create interest and most importantly make the area look deeper and help disguise the awkward shape.

## **Movement**

A sense of movement can be achieved in lots of different ways. The shapes you use have the biggest impact along with how you use the landscaping materials (which we'll cover in more detail in Chapter 5).

Now, if you have an exceptionally tiny garden, it simply may not be big enough to create shapes that direct the eyes from one side of it to another. It might also be impossible not to 'see' the entire garden with one glance. That doesn't mean you should ignore the movement design principle, though. It just means you will need to use it in a more subtle form like positioning a focal point, like a feature pot, or sculpture, in a key location that draws the eye to that one spot before the rest of the garden.

It might sound a bit over the top to try to control how your garden is viewed but it is an intrinsically important part of the process. Think of your garden like a story. You don't want

people jumping straight to the ending before they've taken in all the intrigue of a great plot. It would be boring. The ending alone doesn't make a good story; it's the build up of the plot. If you can think of your garden like this, it will help you create lots of interest.

The more visual interest you can create, the more the eyes and brain have to take on board and the larger the space will appear. Now, before you dash off and manically buy every last feature your local garden centre has in stock, hold on! I want to clarify what I mean by 'lots' of interest.

Chucking in every last thing into a garden does not make for a good design. It will look cluttered and smaller. The type of interest I want you to create is carefully controlled. Adding a feature in a location that lines up with the main window you view the garden from, for instance, will work wonders. Then adding a secondary feature that's viewed after the main feature so that your eyes have something else to look at immediately afterwards (a continuation of the story), and so on, is what I'm talking about.

Just like a good plot, it's helpful, once you've sorted out your main design shapes, to work out how to get people visually from point A to B around your garden. Constructing a design, like a good plot, gives structure and will enable you to create lots of additional interest without cluttering it up with random 'stuff'.

A good storyline on its own isn't enough though. Your garden needs to be well dressed too. So after the plot is complete, the costume department needs to come in...

### **'Clothing' Your Garden - Choosing the Right Shapes and Landscaping Materials**

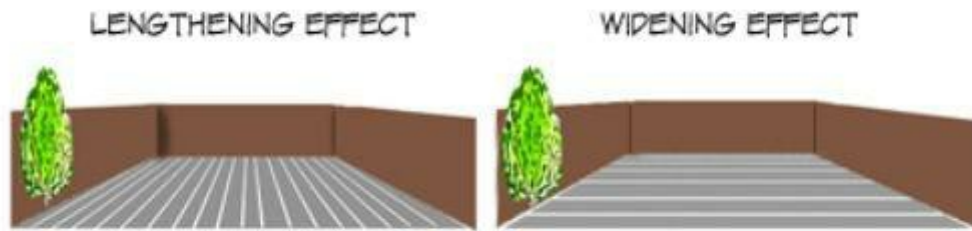
Great garden design basically makes the best use of what you've got. Think of design like tailoring. A good tailor can work wonders with any size or shape of body. Garden design is no different.

Think about how someone tall and slim would look in an outfit, which had lines on it running from head to toe. Would that suit them? Probably not because the lines would accentuate their length and make them look very tall and skinny, even if they happened to be the perfect weight for their frame.

Fashion police aside, now what would happen if our tall, slim person were in an outfit that had lines running horizontally rather than vertically?

Now think in exactly the same way about a garden. If you have paving slabs or decking in a long narrow garden, which is the best direction to lay them in? Lengthways down the garden like our tall person's first outfit, or from side to side?





The direction in which you lay paving slabs and decking can be a very powerful design tool. In the next chapter, we'll take a look at some more design 'tricks' you can use that will help make your garden look and feel larger than it actually is.

### **Chapter 3 Summary:**

*Shape the 'empty' spaces first, no matter what size or shape your garden is.*

*Use shapes that move your eyes from side to side around your garden.*

*Use landscaping materials and 'design lines' to your advantage to make your garden look longer or wider.*

## **Chapter 4 - Small Garden Design Tricks**

### **Illusions of Size**

You've seen in the last chapter just how effective using the right design shapes can be in making your garden look and feel larger. The right shapes are a great start (our compelling storyline) but to really up the ante and take the design to the next level, we need to focus on the details of design. Specifically, how you use the landscaping materials. It's time to let the costume and make-up department really work their magic.

The human brain is a wonderful processor of information. It's also very lazy. I mean, super efficient; in order to be so efficient it has to take short cuts when processing what we see. So we are going to exploit some of those short cuts to make your garden look as big as possible.

If your eyes see a lot of something your brain will tell you lots = big. So when choosing paving for a small garden, **always** pick the smallest sizes because you will need a larger quantity of paving slabs to fill the area. And of course, the opposite is true. If you pave a tiny area with large slabs it will make it look smaller. The example below shows two gardens of similar width, but notice how much wider the bottom example looks using smaller size paving.



As you can see, similar size areas but the size of materials makes a HUGE difference in the perception of space. Combine the size with the direction tactic we covered at the end of the last chapter and you can make an area look much wider or longer.

The next example photograph shows the use of even smaller paving and that will make an area look even larger.



If it doesn't matter which direction you lay the paving slabs in because you do not need to make an area look longer or wider, then choose a random bond laying pattern, but still using the smaller sizes as shown in the planting proportions picture below.

### **Planting proportions**

Now, whilst smaller size paving is essential if you want to make a small space look and feel larger, it's not necessarily the same when it comes to the plants. It can look very effective to have large 'jungle-looking' planting in a small garden, especially when combined with the small paving as shown in the picture below.



Using large leaf plants in a small space works really well because your brain will interpret the jungle to be a large area even if it isn't. You need to choose the plants with care so that they won't overwhelm the garden.

In fact, regardless of your desire to create an urban jungle you do need to adjust the proportion of empty space to planting that we looked at in the first chapter, in small gardens. Here's why: plants grow! Yes, I know you know that, but what I mean is they always spread out over their allotted space. So if you have allowed a 3ft wide planting border, they will spread out to 4ft if given half a chance. It's just what plants do.

So, I find, it's best to let them do their thing but control it at the outset. So in a small garden, if I want a 3ft wide planting border, I'll put it on the plan at 2ft wide, knowing full well that it will get to where I want over time. Now, that can and does look a little strange on the plan and when it's first built because the planting areas look too small. Don't worry, though, it will soon fill out and it will save you constantly hacking back plants.

Whilst we're on the subject of plants, now would be a good time to quickly mention some of the other things you need to consider when it comes to planting a small garden.

### **Planting**

The right plants can make all the difference to how your garden looks and feels. Plants will



help soften the look of the hard landscaping materials and help to tie them in to the surrounding garden.

### **The plants you choose should be based on the following:**

Garden Style

Aspect

Water

Climate

Purpose

When choosing plants for your garden, you need to start with the style of garden you are trying to achieve. Is it traditional, modern, formal, Japanese, etc? Once you know this, research the type of plants that are usually associated with this type of garden.

The next step is to see if those plants will work with the aspect you have (the amount of sun or shade), how much water can be supplied to the area and the climate. Is it going to be too hot in the summer or too cold in the winter for the type of plants you want?

If you are trying to create an exotic or Mediterranean garden in a cold climate, go to your best local nursery or garden centre and ask for their advice. A good expert will be able to suggest plants that will grow in your area that will give you the look and feel of the type of garden style you want to achieve.

One last thing to consider before you go plant shopping is the purpose of the plants. Do you want them to screen an ugly view, reduce exposure to wind gusts, or for privacy? Do you want some edible plants, like herbs, fruit and vegetables? Do you want scent or colour at a certain time of year?

A lot of plants will often 'tell' you which conditions they need to thrive, just by looking at their leaves. Learning which characteristics to look for will save you needing to learn hundreds of individual plants. As part of this Kindle garden design series, I've written a book called 'How to choose the right plants for your garden' which will show you lots of tips and tricks to becoming a 'Plant Whisperer'. See the back of this book for the details.

How you put the plants together to look good all year round is a big topic and the subject of the 'Planting Plan Design System' book that is part of this series. But to give you some pointers, there are a couple of very useful blog posts on the Successful Garden Design website. The first one shows you how to choose plants using a free online plant-picking tool and the other one shows you how to combine those plants effectively.

[How to Choose the Right Plants for Your Garden](#)

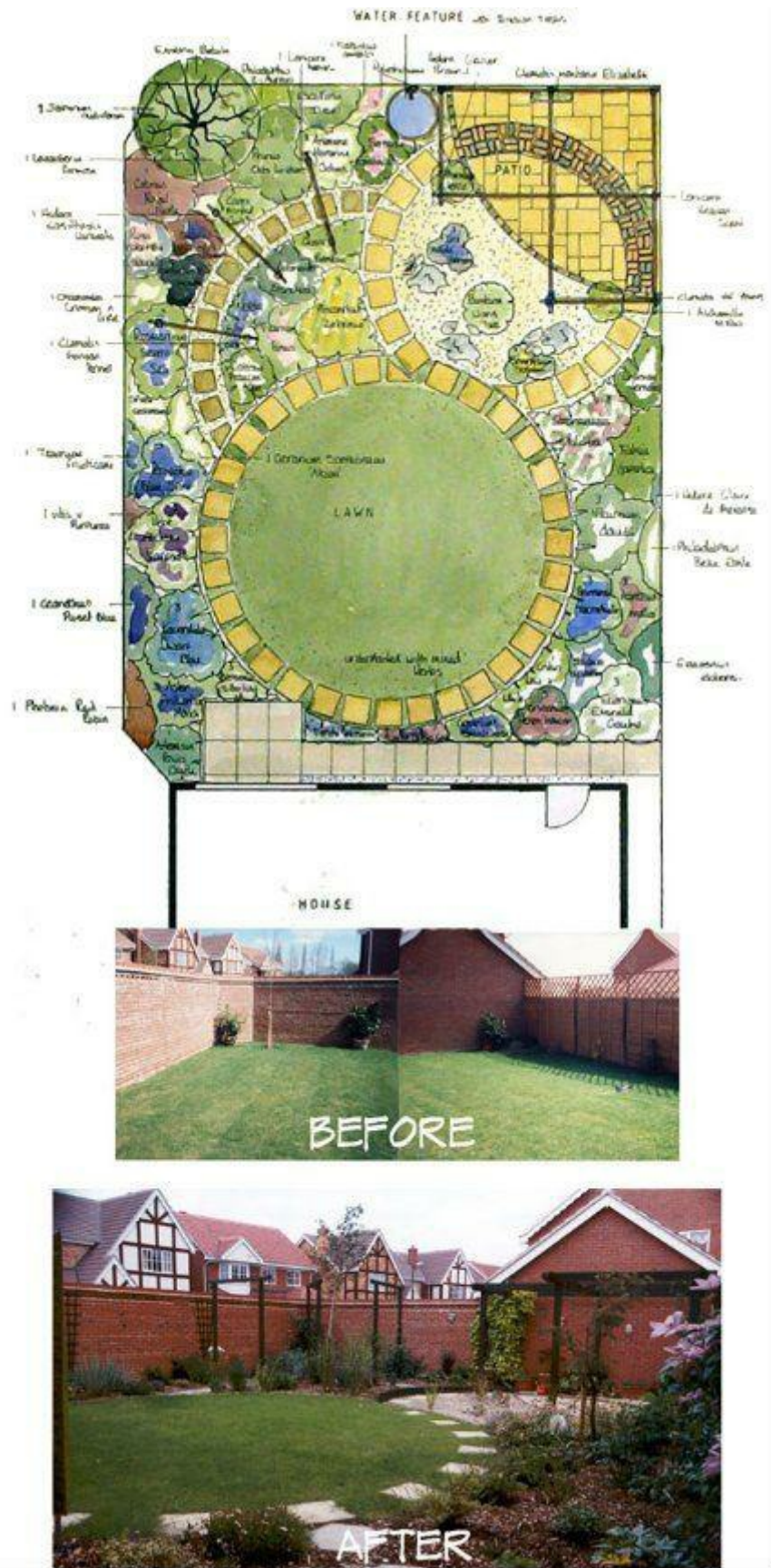
[Combining Plants](#)

**Attracting wildlife in a small garden**

A great deal of the gardens featured so far in this book, have had the majority of the space down to paving and decking. That's not because I'm against planting or grass in a small space, it's because the owners of those gardens preferred low maintenance and wanted as much space for seating, rather than lawn and planting. As a designer, my job is to design to my client's tastes, not my own.

If you prefer a lawn and lots of planting to bring more wildlife into the garden, do not despair. The process I've shown you still works, you just have a lawn instead of all paving or gravel. It's the shape of the lawn or patio that will dictate how good the garden looks, not the surface you use.

So please don't feel that you have to pave or deck the entire garden just because it's small. It's your space and you can, and should, design it to suit your tastes. The examples in the book, I hope, will show you how to organise the space. So you can take a design you like and adjust how much lawn, paving or planting there is to suit your needs. The plan below shows a design with more planting and lawn than hard landscaping.

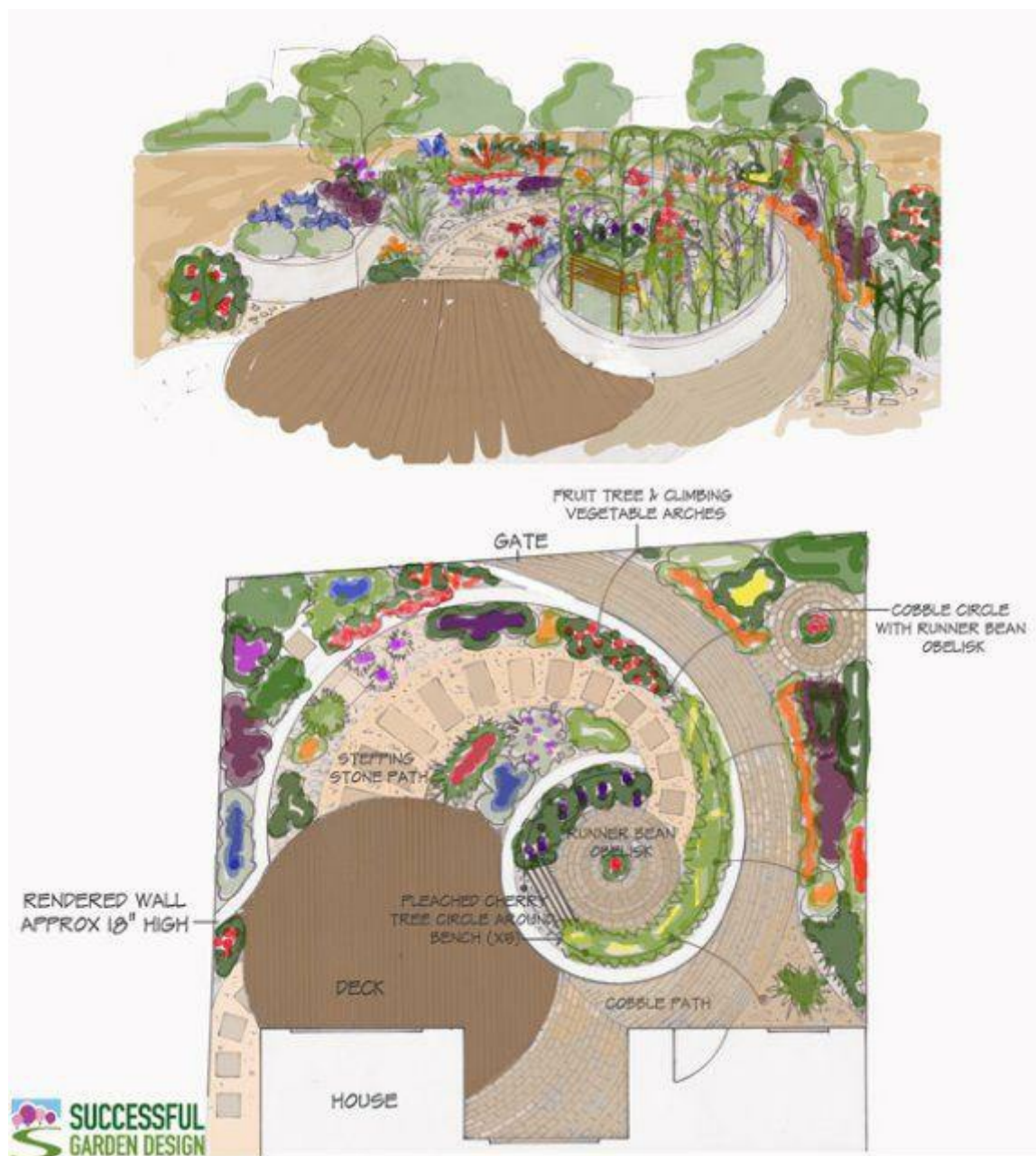


## Edible small space gardens

Small gardens can be terrific for growing a surprising amount of fruit and vegetables. They can also be stylish to look at. A trick you can use to make sure your vegetables don't end up making the garden look messy, when they are past their best, is to hide them behind something solid



like a low box hedge or rendered retaining wall if you are wanting a more modern look, as shown in the plan below.



The planting in the garden featured above is a hundred per cent edible. I was asked to create a modern vegetable garden by author Niki Jabbour, so if you'd like to see the full details and the fruit and vegetable varieties used in the garden, then check out her fantastic new book [\*\*Groundbreaking Food Gardens: 73 Plans That Will Change the Way You Grow Your Garden\*\*](#) it will be in all good book stores.

The other trick to successfully combining vegetables in the garden is to choose varieties with really attractive foliage. Things like Swiss Chard, Beetroot and even Sweetcorn, can look amazing in amongst ornamental plants.

Also consider planters as well as hanging planting pockets for your herbs and vegetables, to utilise every last bit of space in your garden. The advantage of a planter is the ability to move

it when you've finished harvesting your crops, if it looks unsightly.

How you harvest can also make a big difference to the longevity of things like salad leaf veggies. If you remove a few leaves of lettuces, and other salad crops, rather than removing the entire thing, they will last much longer, so you won't have big gaps in your planting every time you want a salad.

### **Ornamental planters**

Planting in shrubs and grasses in pots or in raised planters can give you additional interest and movable colour in your garden. Try to choose planters that will complement the style of garden you are trying to achieve. Terracotta is ideal if you want a Mediterranean feel. Try using sleek, modern planters for contemporary gardens and brightly coloured ones for modern, funky gardens.



If using planters, you must consider the fact that your plants will have to be able to cope with drier conditions than they would in other parts of your garden, as planters do dry out much more quickly.

You can buy swell gels that will help hold water in the soil but be careful with these if you have a lot of rain in the winter. Plants can easily rot and die if they get too wet at any time, but especially in winter.

### **Further Illusions of Size**

Now we've discussed plants, there's another useful trick that works in conjunction with the plants and has been used successfully for centuries - it's the use of mirrors. Adding a mirror can make the garden appear to go on indefinitely if done correctly.

Mirrors have to be used with care and subtly to really be effective, though. The way I like to use them is to position them at the end of a fake path. It's fake because it doesn't actually go anywhere but looks like it does because of the mirror at the end of it.

If you want to be really cunning, then attaching a gate next to the mirror adds an extra layer of believability visually. If a gate is not going to work because your garden is just too small, then try a window or portal instead.

An illusion trellis panel will help make these work as shown below.



I mentioned you need to use mirrors carefully. Here's the critical thing to look out for when deciding on placing a mirror: what will it reflect back? If the reflection goes straight back to your house or a utility area, it's never going to look nice if that's all you see in the mirror.

Ideally, you want it to reflect some garden back so that it looks like there is a whole other garden you can walk through to. This will really make your garden look and feel larger.

The other thing you need to be careful of with mirrors, is preferably not positioning them in the sun. You don't want to accidentally start a fire with the reflected sunlight!

Now, features for gardens come in and out of fashion. Some garden designers these days do get a bit precious over the use of mirrors as it is the oldest trick in the book. But so what? It works, and works really well. If the situation is right, I have no qualms whatsoever about using them and neither should you. Obviously, if you have small children that are likely to run into them or cause damage with footballs, it's probably not a good idea, but other than that, if the location is right with the reflection, go for it!

### **Changes in Level**

It's a funny thing when it comes to a change of level in a garden - the people that have one don't want it because they see it as an obstacle. The people that don't have a change of level want one because they think their flat garden is boring!

I usually try to steer people away from creating artificial changes in level because of the cost but in a small garden it's totally possible and can be a great way of maximising the space.

So, let's first look at how you tackle an existing change in level, then we'll look at how to create one if you don't.

The first job is to make an existing change of level work for you. To do that you need to be aware of it (mark the location on the plan of the main changes of height as shown on the plan below, if it is stepped) but when it comes to the initial stages of design, ignore it.



There is no rule that says the change of level needs to, one, stay exactly where it is now - it might be better if it is moved back or forward. And, two, there is no rule that says the change in height has to be a straight line across the garden - you are free to change the shape as well as the location of the level change.

Now, moving levels around, does have cost implications, but to begin with ignore that as well. I know this might sound like an awful lot of sticking your head in the sand but it's important you don't get overwhelmed with 'problems' whilst trying to design.

You will produce much better results if you tackle one thing at a time. You can probably guess by now that I'm going to tell you to get the shape right first, that's a given. It's helpful to come up with a design shape you like without even thinking about the level change.

Once you've got a shape you like, you can experiment modifying it and moving it to work with the levels by incorporating steps to get from A to B. That's then the time to think about the cost implications.

If you are shifting a lot of soil around the garden that requires people and machinery, then it's probably not going to be cheap. If it's something you can do yourself over a few weekends, then it's fine to put the level change wherever it looks best on your design (without causing your neighbour's gardens to collapse!).

How do you know where looks best, though? Well, part of that answer comes down to your personal needs and tastes, and some of it will be practical. If you have a change of level right outside your patio doors and can hardly get a chair there, let alone a table, it might be nice to dig back some extra space to make the area more usable.



The slope in this small back garden made it almost impossible to use. By terracing the garden into three defined levels, each area became a useable space.

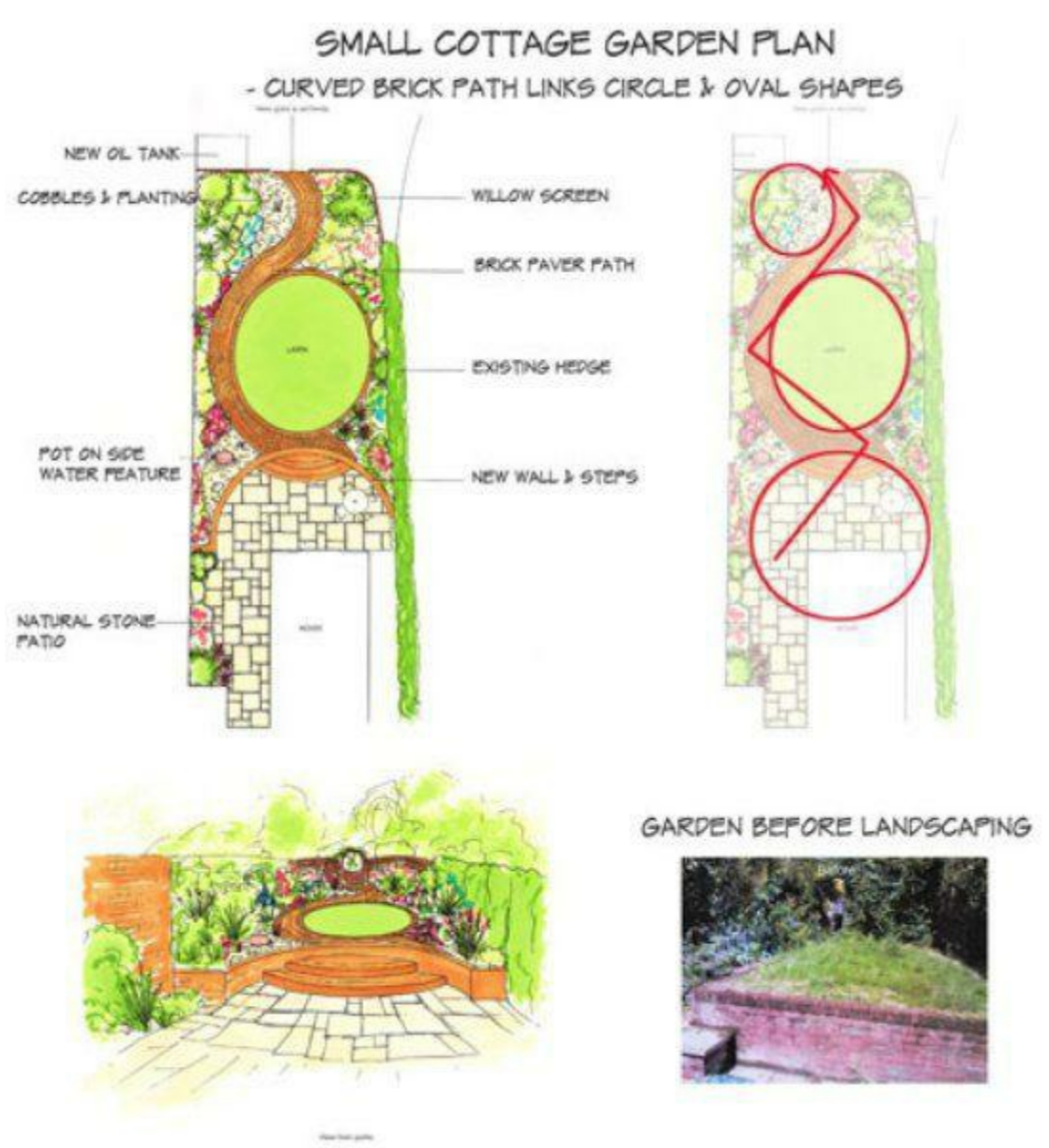
So take a look at your wish list - what do you want from the garden and does what you've drawn achieve it? If not, what can you do differently by adjusting and moving the 'empty spaces' around?

### Linking Changes of Level

Whilst we're on the subject of changes in level, one thing that's very important is to line up any steps with the door or windows you look out from the most. This is because if there is a solid wall (yes, even if it is only a foot high) your eyes automatically stop at the wall, even if there

is a fair amount of garden the other side of that wall. But if you have steps in place, your eyes follow the steps up and link the rest of the garden.

Having two separate spaces in a garden can be nice, but visually you need them to link or your brain will just see two small spaces rather than one larger space. So it really helps if the view you look out from the most has the steps to visually join the dots.



This small cottage garden looks three times larger because of the way the steps and new shape of the retaining wall lead the eye up the garden and link the patio with the garden beyond. The curved path takes your eyes from side-to-side which makes it look and feel wider and longer.

### Creating Level Changes





If your garden is as flat as the proverbial pancake then creating a change in level can bring an extra dimension to your garden. I don't tend to change the ground level because gardens without steps are safer. I prefer to create areas of raised borders, often with built-in seating.

You do, of course, need to be really careful when adding a raised border or seating area because it does take up space. So, again, design the shape of the 'empty spaces' first, then and only then add the raised beds. It's not necessarily going to work in every garden, especially if they are really tiny, but experiment, nonetheless.

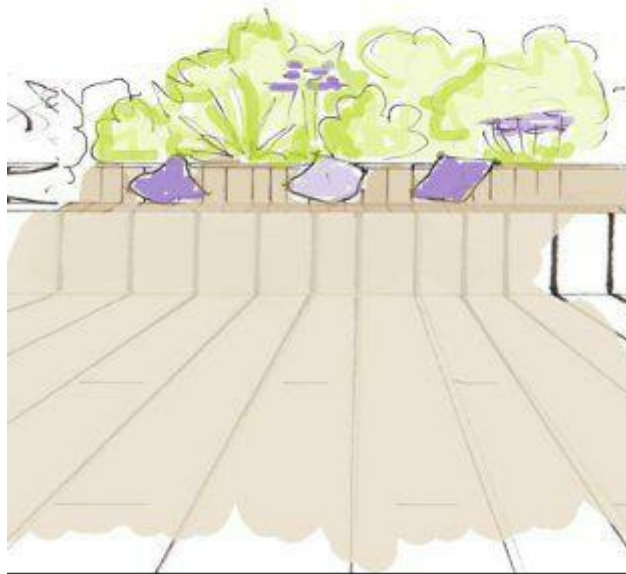


Creating built-in seating areas in your garden can be a really good use of space and can add a lot of interest to your design. Another advantage of seating is that it can be used for storage if you add a hinge to the seat base.

The seating areas can be built from timber, stone clad walling, brick or rendered block work, as shown in the photographs above. Paving slabs make an excellent material for the top of the seat, as long as temperatures don't get too hot in the summer.

You can also use paving slabs to build the entire structure. It can look very effective to have the paving slabs running up into a seating area in the same direction as the patio. This continuation of landscape material can also make the area look and feel larger. See the example drawing.

## PAVING PLANTER SEAT



### Creating Vertical Interest

Adding another layer of height to your design by incorporating upright structures like pergolas, arches, planting rails and small trees also help add more interest to your garden. Again, this may not work in extremely tiny gardens but can be very effective to make a space feel larger because your eyes go up as well as along, when viewing the garden.

How do you tell if adding a vertical element will work in your garden? There are a couple of ways I find help me visualise how it will look. If you are adding a pergola, get hold of some very tall bamboo canes and place them where you would build the pergola. This will enable you to get a feel for impact an upright structure will bring.

If you're unable to get hold of tall canes or the ground is too solid to push them into, then the next solution will help you. Take some photos of your garden and trace over the outline of it and add the design shape you've done so far. Then draw in the pergola, arch or whatever upright element you want to add.

This really doesn't have to be a great work of art. Tracing over the photographs will get the right perspective and proportion and just drawing in a few upright lines to represent the pergola etc. should help give you enough of an idea to visualise how it will look.

Also check how you feel about the addition. Does your gut tighten at the thought of it or do you feel all warm and fuzzy? It's important that you don't feel hemmed in and claustrophobic. Adding anything to the garden has to work and if it doesn't feel right, don't do it! That's more important than adding something just because you read it in a book.

I don't add upright structures to every small garden I design. In fact, probably to only 25% of them. Every garden and situation is individual and a good design is tailored to take these things into account. In this book, I'm suggesting options you can pick from. You don't need to do every last one of them to create a nice garden.



The somewhat irritating phrase 'less is more' springs to mind (it is actually true when it comes to great design). Whilst I want to encourage you to really go for it with your small garden design and create lots of interest it does still need simplicity in the design.

Think of it like a beautiful car. The overall shape is sleek and understated yet the alloy wheels, paint and trim add the extra pizzazz. So keep the design shapes simple, then decorate with the extras like water features, paving details and so on.

Funnily enough the next chapter is dedicated to how to add that pizzazz or 'WOW' factor as I call it. We'll look at everything from paving details, lighting and lots of other yummy features.

#### ***Chapter 4 Summary:***

*Smaller sizes of paving will trick your eyes into thinking areas are larger than they actually are.*

*Careful jungle like planting is very effective in small gardens. Choose the plants to suit the garden style you want to achieve.*

*Use changes in level to your advantage. Add interest with raised planters but always think about the underlying design shapes first.*

#### **Chapter 5 - Adding the 'WOW' to Your Garden**

So far, we've concentrated on the bones of design, how it flows and functions and most importantly keeping things simple. Now it's time to add the glitz and the glamour and create something really special with your garden.

The simplest ways to add a bit sparkle to your garden is by using features. These can be anything from a small, ornate gazebo to an attractive pot turned on its side surrounded by decorative cobbles. Features can cost as little or as much as you want.

If you're on a tight budget, have a look around and see if you've anything lying around that could be painted and put in the garden, like an old chair painted a bright magenta or a flower



pot painted azure blue. The limit is only your imagination, not your purse strings.

The positioning of focal points is important. As we discussed earlier, they work best if they are at the end of natural viewpoints that line up from your main windows or patio doors. Even stunning planting schemes are enhanced with the use of a focal point. Just having something solid for your eyes to focus on helps bring clarity as well as creating a point of interest.

The patterns you create with your paving can also create lots of interest. Like we said earlier, choose smaller size paving materials to make the area look and feel larger. Mixing materials together to create a pattern is also very effective.

When it comes to hard landscaping materials, I try not to use more than three different types. By limiting your choices you'll create much more clarity which is important to when it comes to keeping things simple.

### **Creating Interest by Mixing Materials**

You can make a paved area more interesting by mixing up the materials you use. For example, by using a brick that is similar to your house brick around the edge of the patio can look really nice and helps tie in the patio to the rest of your property.

When combining different materials, make sure you don't overdo it, otherwise the result might be very fussy and hotchpotch. As a guide, use no more than three different materials.

This mix of three can be any type of surface you can comfortably walk on; it doesn't have to be limited to paving. You can mix paving with gravel areas, decking, pebbles pressed in concrete, brick pavers, tiles on edge, mosaics and anything else you can think of that's weather proof.



### **Paving Patterns**

The way you put the paving together will have a big impact on the final look of the garden. If

you want to create a traditional, old style patio, then laying lots of different sized paving slabs in a random bond will create that look. If you prefer a more modern look, then between one to three sizes of paving laid in a geometric pattern will do the trick.



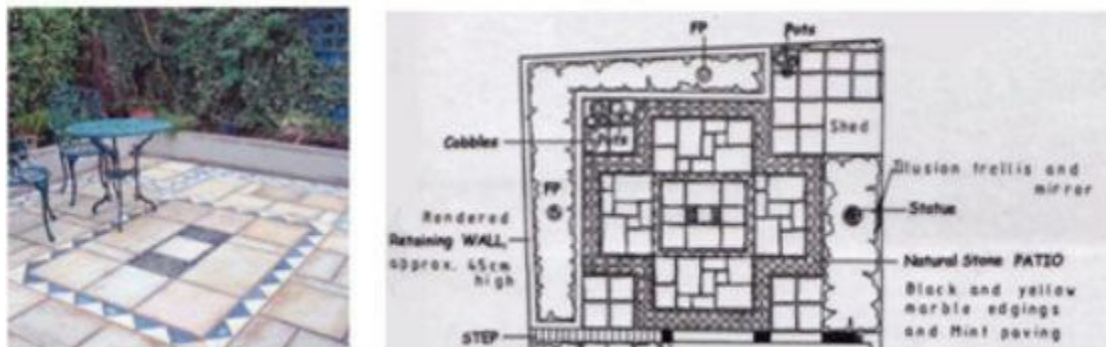
The following paving examples give ideas on how you can mix certain paving types to create different looks to suit different garden styles.

Random bond paving in 5 mixed sizes makes the area look wider and longer because of the mixed directions.



### Traditional Paving Pattern Example Ideas:

Natural stone random paving mixed with marble triangle sections and black pebbles pressed into concrete add interest to a tiny courtyard.





Random paving in this small, formal courtyard garden with old slate tile feature segment

### Modern Paving Pattern Example:



Mixing different sized paving in sections can also be a very effective way to create interest and lead the eye to different parts of the garden.

NATURAL STONE PAVING WITH 'TUMBLLED' EDGES, MAKES THE SLABS LOOK OLDER AND CREATES A TRADITIONAL LOOK AND FEEL.



MODERN, SMOOTH, NATURAL STONE PAVING IN LIGHT AND DARK COLOURS





## Adding a Feature Section

Incorporating a small section of paving in a small garden draws the eye, breaking up the area and adding interest to your garden.



This feature section of your patio could contain pebbles pressed into concrete, tiles on edge, shells, a mosaic... Your choice of combinations can be anything you can think of that's practical. Try to line up this feature section with the centre of your patio, or at least have it line up with a key view point, so that, visually, it makes sense for the feature to be there. Avoid having it anywhere you are likely to want to put furniture, otherwise you're not going to be able to see it properly and it will lose the impact.

## Built-In Planters



It doesn't just have to be seating that is built into your patio. Raised planting borders can also look very attractive, and can double up as seating sometimes, too. Just as with the raised seating, the planting borders can be made out of timber, brick or rendered block work.

The planters will need to be lined with either a special paint or liner so that the soil doesn't come through and stain the outside of the planter.

When you are drawing the planter onto your plan, make sure that you draw both the external walls and the internal walls on your plan. This will enable you to see that you've definitely left enough room for the soil and plants before you start building it. It's very easy to think you've

got your planters wide enough and then find that they actually have very little room for the plants.

You don't have to have built-in planters, of course. Plants in large pots and tubs can also look very effective in helping to create additional interest, colour and variety on your patio.

## **Water Features**



Having water incorporated into your garden can be exciting and dynamic, or it can create tranquillity and relaxation. If the water feature is close to where you sit, it's better that it relaxes, otherwise you'll constantly be wanting to go to the bathroom!

When positioning the water feature, try to line it up with one of your main viewing points, either from the house or from the patio itself, so that it becomes a focal point.

The water feature can be a built-in one, made from walling or rendered blocks with a waterproof lining. The wall around the water can also be used as additional seating if the wall height is not too high.

Having planting close to the water feature can also look really good. So think about using plants to tie in your water feature to the rest of the patio and garden.

You can purchase stand-alone water feature kits, too. Some of them require a reservoir of water to be below ground/patio level, so factor this in before you buy them.

Whatever type of water feature you choose, do consider safety as regards the size, location and style of feature you install.

## **Lighting Your Garden**

The addition of small LED and solar lights in your garden can create a truly magical effect in the evening. They are relatively easy to install, and lighting these days is much more energy-efficient than it used to be.

It's a really good idea to light up any steps or changes in level. Lighting can be very effective if it is positioned in the base of planters or raised seating, throwing a shaft of light across the paving.



Think about lighting any feature plants and trees that you have, either on the patio or close to it. If you're on a tight budget, a well-positioned security light with a few LED lights can be really effective and relatively inexpensive.

### ***Chapter 5 Summary:***

*Create interest by mixing different types of hard landscaping materials together. Be careful not to mix too many different types - three is usually enough.*

*For additional interest add a feature section to your paved areas, a water feature or built-in planters.*

*Add LED lighting to highlight areas in the garden at night. Light the 'visual journey' around the garden as well as focal points.*

### **And Finally...**

I hope you can now see that size really doesn't matter when it comes to creating a beautiful garden. I also hope that this book has inspired you to be bold and design your own garden. The best advice I can give you at this stage is just to go for it. Putting your ideas down on paper will enable you to test they work before you build the garden.

One last tip is to keep the overall design really, really simple. If it looks quite dull when you first put it on paper, good, you've got it right! Then you can add the features and details that make it interesting. If you saw my rough draft designs, before I've added all of the snazzy bits, I think you'd be surprised at just how simple the underlying structure shapes are.

### **Download the Small Garden Design Cheat Sheet**



To go along with this Kindle book, I've put together a 'cheat sheet' that contains the steps to successfully designing a small garden. You can download it and print it off so you don't have to keep referring to the chapter summaries in book. Download it now, here: <http://www.successfulgardendesign.com/amazon-small-garden/> On the download page there's also a video showing you round the Moroccan courtyard garden featured on the front cover.

### **Limitations...**

As fantastic a platform Kindle is, the technology is still in its infancy, especially where images and layout are concerned. The average photo these days is usually over 4MB but each image on the Kindle platform has to be less than 256KB which does affect the quality.

The images here are maximum size allowed but they aren't any where near the quality or quantity I'd like to include and don't get me started on formatting restrictions!

This book was based on the Small Garden Formula online course that can be downloaded from Successful Garden Design website. The full course includes an expanded pdf with lots more pictures and plans. There's also video tutorials showing the design process step-by-step and access to a small garden photo ideas gallery for additional inspiration. To find out more just visit: <http://www.courses.successfulgardendesign.com/smallgarden/>

### **Additional Help and Information**

I hope you found this small garden design ebook useful and that it has helped you to plan your perfect garden. If you need any additional help or information, do visit the [Successful Garden Design](http://www.successfulgardendesign.com) website. If you have a **design** question that hasn't been answered either here or on the Successful Garden Design website, then drop me an e-mail by filling in the contact form on the website and I will be happy to answer your question.

### **Has the information in this book been helpful?**

I hope you found this ebook useful. I'd really appreciate it if you could leave a review on either [Amazon.co.uk](http://Amazon.co.uk) or [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) and let me know if it's helped you as well as any suggestions you have for future editions.

### **About the Author**



Rachel Mathews has been designing gardens professionally for over 20 years. In that time, she has designed hundreds of different size, shape and styles of garden, from tiny contemporary courtyards to large, traditional, formal gardens, both in the UK and internationally.

Rachel divides her time between designing and teaching online garden design courses at [Successful Garden Design](http://www.successfulgardendesign.com).

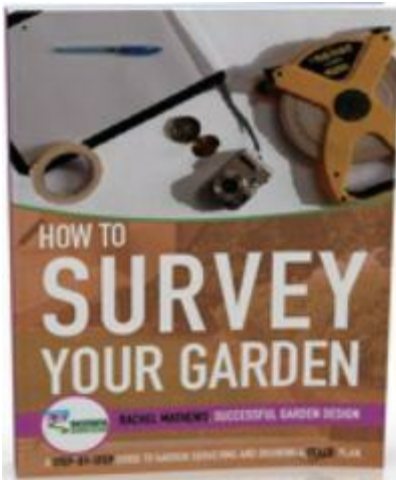
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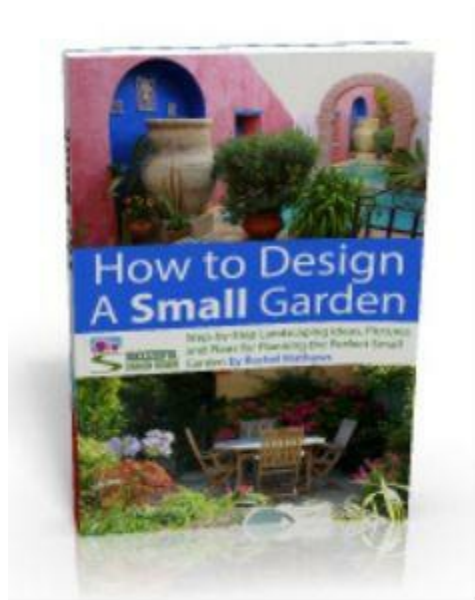
## **Books in the 'How to Plan Your Garden' series**

### [How to Survey Your Garden](#)



The vital first stage of planning your garden is surveying and drawing a scale plan. Unless the plan is to scale you won't be able to design and build the garden properly as nothing will fit as you imagine it to. This book explains how to easily measure and draw a scale plan of your garden. There's nothing complicated – it's simple to follow and anyone can do it. The book is packed with useful tips and tricks to make the whole process easy.

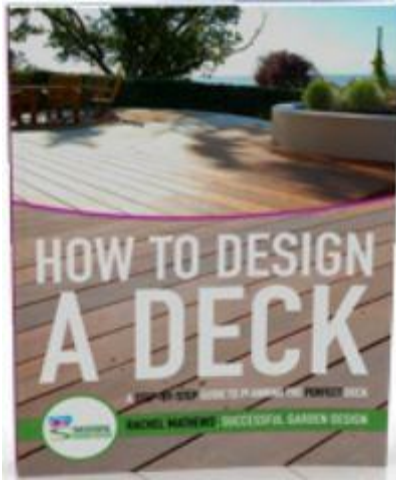
### [How to Design A Small Garden](#)



This book will show you how to make any small garden look and feel larger and more

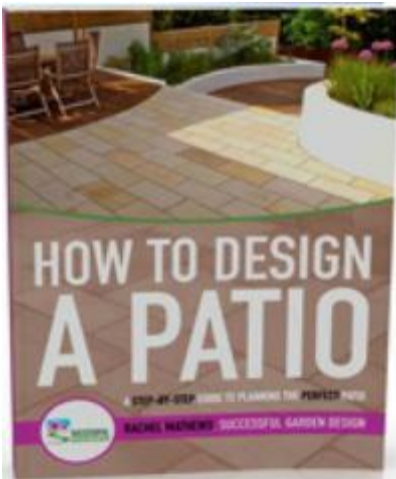
interesting, no matter what shape or how small your garden is. There are plenty of example plans to inspire you to plan the perfect garden.

### [How to Design a Deck](#)



How to Design a Deck is packed full of easy to follow tips and ideas to help you design the perfect deck for your home and garden. It's vital to choose a shape that enhances the space and makes the garden work. This book explains how to design a deck or improve your existing garden without needing to spend a fortune. There are lots of tips and tricks for making areas look longer or wider, and how to add the 'Wow' factor to your garden.

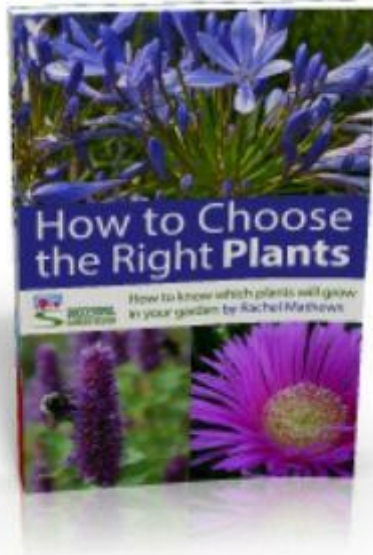
### [How to Design a Patio](#)



How to Design a Patio is packed full of easy to follow tips and ideas to help you design the perfect deck for your home and garden. It's vital to create the right shape patio and choose paving that enhances the space and makes the garden work. This book explains how to design a patio, improve your existing garden without needing to spend a fortune. There are lots of tips and tricks for making areas look longer or wider, and how to add the 'Wow' factor to your garden.

### [How to Choose the Right Plants](#)

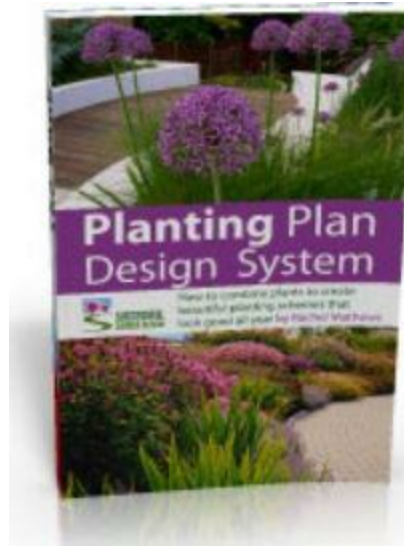




This book helps take the stress out of plant buying. It will show you simple methods to enable you to know what conditions a plant needs to grow in just by looking at its attributes. There are also tips on how to know what soil type you have and lots of easy to follow tips that will enable you to buy plants that will thrive in your garden. Choosing plants that suit the conditions you have, will save you a fortune in fatalities, and this book will guide you on how to know which plants will work and which won't.

**Includes a bonus video** on how to tell which plants need acid soil and which need alkaline soil.

### [Planting Plan Design System](#)



How you put plants together in combination is vital if you want your garden to look good all year. In this book Rachel will share her secrets of creating stunning planting combinations. She'll also share some of her favourite core combinations that you can use as a base for your own planting scheme.

**Coming Soon**



## Garden Design & Landscaping - The Beginner's Guide (Dec 2013)

This book will explain what's involved in successfully landscaping a garden and how to go about it. The book covers how to work with landscaping professionals, how to DIY design your garden, how to learn about garden design. This book also answers the following questions: what's the difference between a gardener, a landscaper and a garden designer? Is garden design software worth using? How do I choose a landscaper to work with? How do you tell if a landscaper is a good one?

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