

gardening

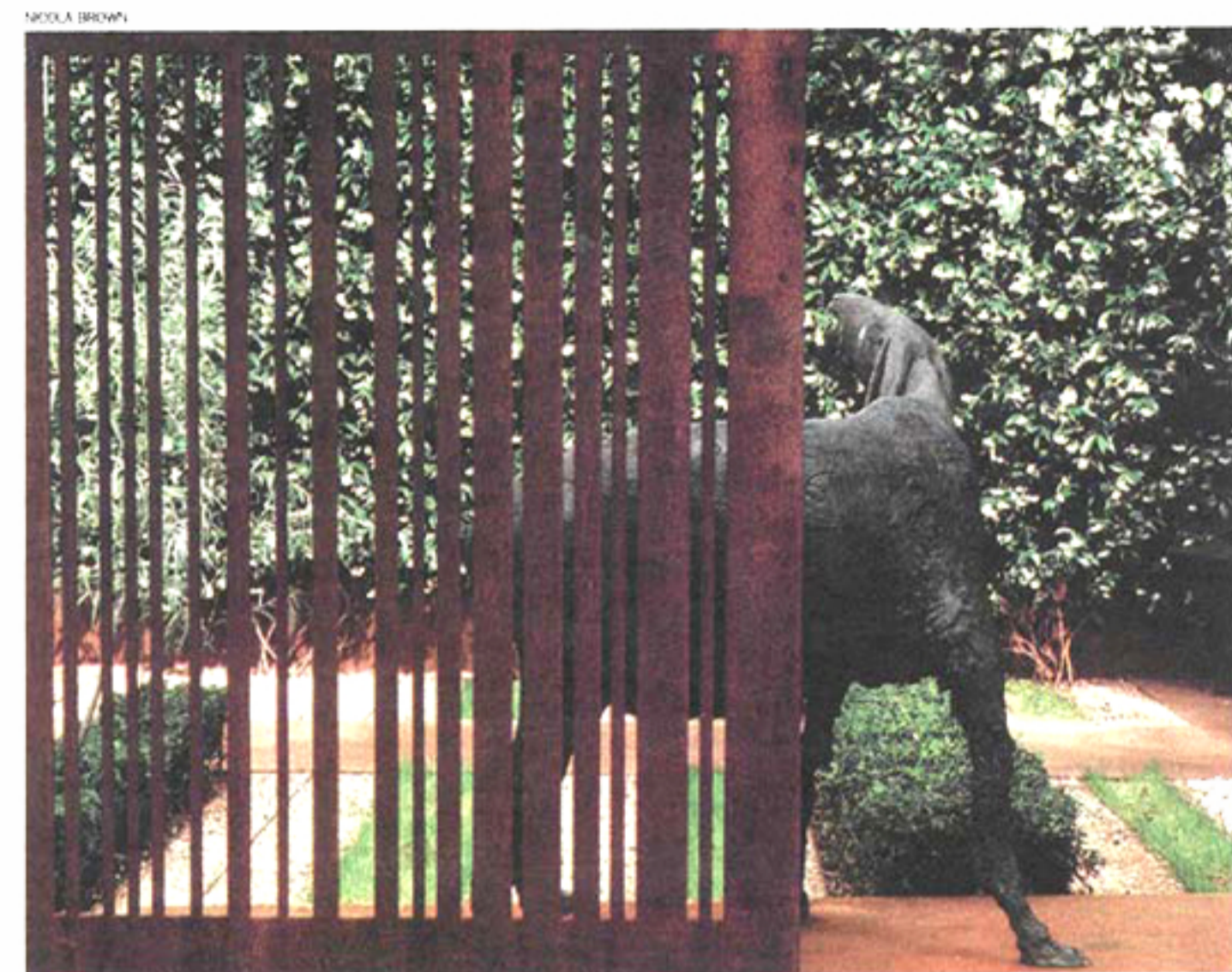
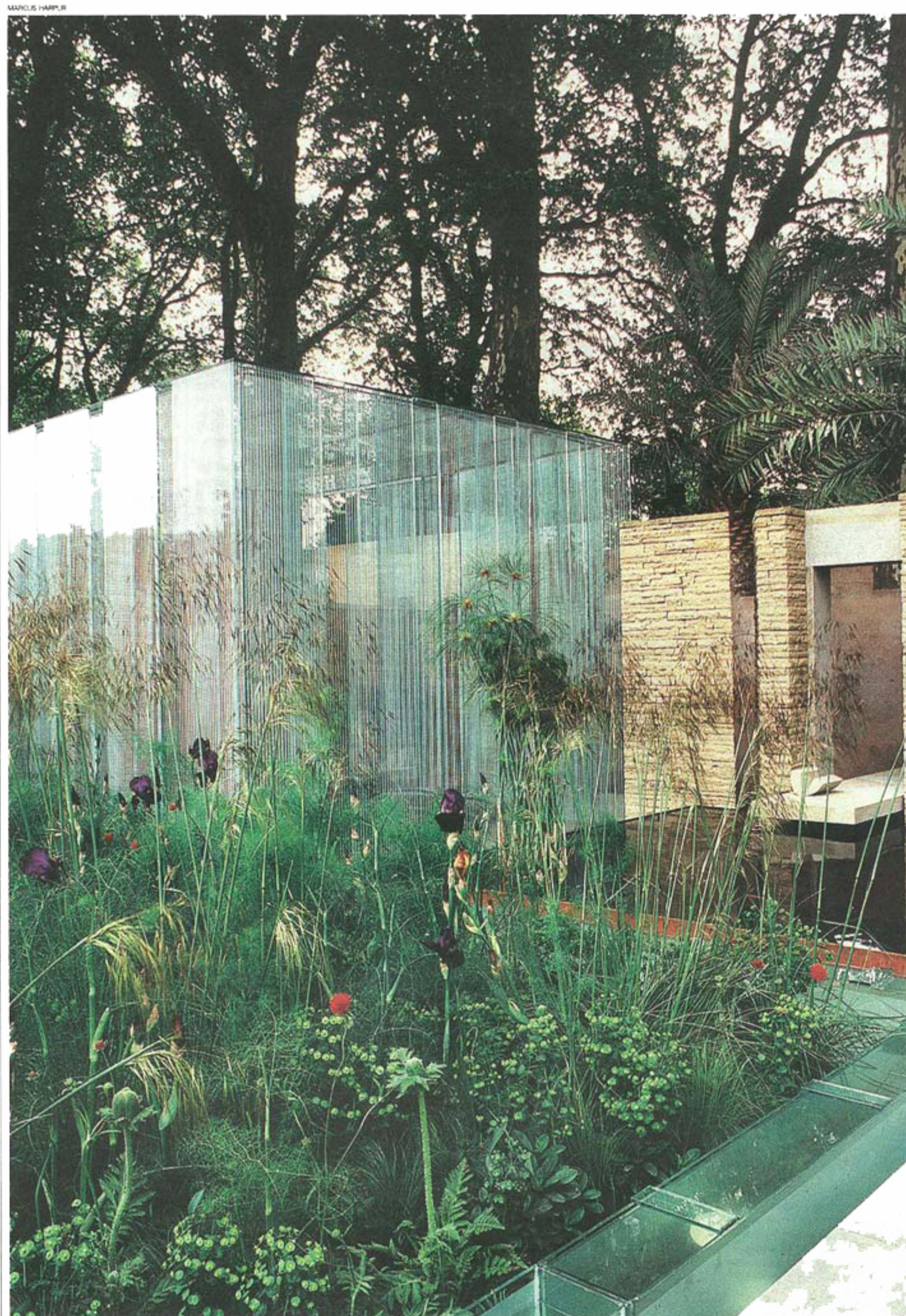
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Vertical thinking

Hop poles, scaffolding, filigree ironwork . . . every garden needs a bit of height and glamour, says Jinny Blom

Well-grown climbing plants are one of the best things in the garden. They are spectacularly useful in a small space and can transform an area which has few inherent dynamics, such as a flat garden without trees or decent walls. Many of us have tiny gardens and these days a good supporting wall is something of a luxury.

This is where free-standing vertical supports come to the rescue. Of course vertical supports can be design features in their own right, emphasising or accentuating your style. For faded glamour, rusty iron in any form is exciting; consider lengths of old chain hung from a metal pergola frame made from old scaffold poles. Or see what's on offer at an architectural salvage yard. On one of my recent reces, I was tempted by a delightful old French metal rose cupola — an ideal trysting spot when smothered in *Rosa 'Phyllis Bide'* with its tattered scented flowers. Try using old metal window frames, artfully rusted, or dismember a defunct French iron campaign bed and use the resulting panels as supports for lighter climbers, such as *Dicentra scandens* or the exotic trumpet flowered honeysuckle, *Lonicera tragophylla*.

There are also the light and pretty wirework arches and pergolas, based on Victorian designs (like those made by Matthew Eden), that are still worthy of a place in gardens as they dress up well. Old stone

columns are very decorative and mixing contemporary simplicity with reclaimed or antique items is fun. Use some delicious antique stone columns, even a single one will be enough, twined with ivy and a limpid rose such as the exquisite climber *Rosa 'Princesse de Nassau'*.

Timber makes a welcome change from the whimsy of willow. I've used old hardwood floor joists before now as vertical accents, streaked with distemper and festooned with magenta *Clematis 'Abundance'*. Hop poles are perfect for rearing climbers in the middle of the garden and ash hayforks from the Pyrenees make really good supports set through a flower bed or tied to a fence. Each one is different and can be enhanced by charring with a blowtorch (this also makes them rot-proof), then rubbing back with a wire brush. Thus blackened, they will make a good foil for bright colours and the charring makes them rot proof.

If you've got some money, go to a proper craftsman such as Andrew Findlay who makes really unusual filigree arches and exotic arabic arbours in stainless steel. But remember, even twiggy stems of hazel pushed into the ground in spring will look far better all year than a tacky metal spiral leaning at an irritating angle.

For a contemporary garden, why not create cheap columns by scrunching up tall tubes of

chicken wire and spray-painting them in ice-cream pinks. Smother them with the barmy but beautiful annual *Lablab purpureus* and they will elicit gasps of wonder from friends.

Finally, if, like me, you hate the dreadful, gingery trellis panels on sale at garden centres, then design your own and have a local carpenter or landscaper knock it up for you on site. Don't try anything too complex — a simple squared pattern always looks best.

A rusted iron screen provides strong vertical accent in this town garden designed by Ross Palmer

Where to buy

Architectural salvage:
www.salvo.co.uk
Garden antiques: **Lassco**,
Mark St, London EC2
(020-7749 9944;
www.lassco.co.uk).

Sotheby's, Summers
Place, West Sussex
(01403 833560;
www.sothebys.com), next
saie September 23.
Jardinique, Old Park
Farm, Kings Hill, Beech,
Alton, Hampshire
(01420 560055).

Wirework supports:
**Matthew Eden Garden
Furniture**, Pickwich End,
Corsham, Wiltshire
(01249 713335;
www.mattheweden.co.uk).

Ironwork supports:
Andrew Findlay, The
Forge, Eastnor, Ledbury
Herefordshire
(01531 634999)