

# DESIGNER SECRETS

Jinny Blom describes how she combined clean lines and simple planting to create a low-maintenance family garden



## DESIGNER PROFILE

**JINNY BLOM** is an award-winning garden designer who grew up in England and France. In 1995, she started working with Dan Pearson

before setting up on her own in 2000. Her style has an emphasis on naturalistic, sculptural plantings. She works on private commissions and is currently designing her third Chelsea Flower Show garden.

**THE BRIEF** The owners were looking for a way to connect the top and bottom levels of a steeply sloping garden. They also wanted a flower garden with year-round interest, where they could entertain on a generous scale, with a play area for the children.

The garden's owners, Emma and Bernard Shapero, asked me to create an outdoor space that would tie in with the very contemporary extension to their period home in London's Hampstead.

"The garden's slope posed the greatest challenge. This required tons of earth to be excavated to make a flat basement level and an upper area. After this we used 'in situ' concrete to create the garden's structure, which included the steps that link the two levels. As the structure supports not only part of the Shaperos' house but also one side of that of a neighbour, we had to call in a structural engineer to help us. I filled the sloping flowerbeds either side of the steps with low maintenance plants as my clients are not gardeners.

"To help the flow between the different levels, I linked the garden's upper area to the property's first-floor glass terrace with a metal ramp. The elevated views were lovely, marred only by the outline of an ugly hospital which needed to be hidden. As one of the neighbouring gardens was screened by a high wall to the right of the ramp, I had only to renovate the fences on the remaining two sides to ensure privacy." ■

PHOTOGRAPH NICOLA BROWNE



## GEOMETRICAL SHAPES

"Straight lines work well in a small area and increase the sense of space."



## NATURAL SCREENING

"The row of river birches along the back fence helps to disguise the harsh outline of the hospital beyond."

## METAL MESH RAMP

"A metal mesh ramp leading down from the first-floor glass terrace to the garden allows rain to drip through to the planting below, where ferns and other shade-loving plants thrive."

## FACT FILE

### KEY PLANTS

The following have soft colours to meld with the concrete:

- *Betula nigra* (river birch) with pink peeling bark.
- *Geranium 'Patricia'* has fuchsia-pink blooms which provide vibrant drifts of colour.
- *Panicum virgatum 'Heavy Metal'* with its smoky-grey blades of grass.
- *Cercis canadensis 'Forest Pansy'* for its lush, deep-red foliage.

### WHERE TO BUY

All from [crocus.co.uk](http://crocus.co.uk).

### KEY MATERIALS

- **Crumb rubber** for the children's area in the lower terrace.

### WHERE TO BUY

TRM & Sons, 0161 684 8486, [trm-limited.co.uk](http://trm-limited.co.uk).

- **White limestone** for the seating panel and the upper terrace.

### WHERE TO BUY

Stone Age, 0800 404 8899, [estone.co.uk](http://estone.co.uk).

- **Crushed limestone** for part of the upper terrace.

### WHERE TO BUY

CED, 01708 867237, [ced.ltd.uk](http://ced.ltd.uk).

### CONTACT DETAILS

- Jinny Blom Garden Design, 020 7253 2100, [jinnyblom.co.uk](http://jinnyblom.co.uk).
- Elliott Wood (structural engineers), 020 8544 0033, [elliottwood.co.uk](http://elliottwood.co.uk).