

SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

- ✓ **POSITION SCREENS** in a staggered design to add depth to a shallow space.
- ✓ **CREATE A DRY RIVERBED** with cobbles in different sizes.
- ✓ **SECTION YOUR LOG STORE** so you can leave parts of it undisturbed, creating nooks and crannies for insects.

Give bees a home in your plot too. Turn to p38

“It’s a haven for wildlife as well as me”

Brilliant design and pollen-rich blooms have turned Ilse Burger’s overgrown Greater Manchester plot into an **ECO-FRIENDLY GARDEN** for all to enjoy

GARDEN makeover

Acer palmatum 'Katsura'

Echinacea purpurea 'Kim's Knee High'

Yellow archangel

BEFORE



An overgrown jungle of trees and shrubs

When Ilse Burger moved to her 1920s semi in 2015, she knew from the get-go that the unloved tangle of grass, patio and pond in the back garden would have to go. “I wanted my garden to be an extension of the kitchen/dining area and to be seamlessly connected, a place where I could sit out in the evening and smell the flowers,” says Ilse, who works in the NHS as a stroke

consultant. “But while I didn’t want to have to manage a lawn, I was keen to keep the trees and shrubs that framed the plot and to encourage wildlife. I feel it’s really important to preserve the green areas in cities as much as possible as they provide a haven for wildlife. There’s an important ecological and environmental need for it, but it also helps with environment-influenced diseases such as asthma.”



Ilse loves how her garden buzzes with natural life

MY GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION Worsley, near Manchester

THE LOOK Wild but modern

SITE Size 170m² Faces North

Soil Clay with peat-free compost and horticultural grit added

MY BUDGET

Clearance & preparation **£3,800**
 Lighting & installation **£1,500**
 Timber supply & construction **£14,500**
 Stone paving **£2,800**
 Cobbles & boulders **£1,380**
 Plants **£2,500** Corten pots **£1,356**
TOTAL: £27,836

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Clearance & prep **2 weeks**
 Installing lights **2 days**
 Timber construction **4 weeks**
 Paving **1 week** Planting **3 days**
TOTAL: approx 2 months



TALL AND AIRY, verberna will keep butterflies, bees and dragonflies fluttering from flower to flower all summer. It prefers full sun.

Love these brunnera leaves? Turn to p92

A LOG STORE is a welcome home for insects and other wildlife.

Switch grass

Red hook sedge



BEFORE

There was a clear divide between indoors and out



AFTER

Clever design creates a seamless flow from the house to the patio

a lawn would be," says David. "Avoiding tropical hardwoods was also an important ecological design consideration – I used American southern yellow pine which lasts for 25 years outside and has warm, tonal looks. Working on this eco garden with Ilse was a joy and is one of the proudest achievements of my career – what I learned from designing it has coloured my view and my approach to work ever since."

NATURAL DECISIONS

Thanks to the garden's small scale, it didn't take long for the structure of the new design to become clear once the overgrown planting was cleared and construction began. "It was exciting to see the garden taking shape when I got home from work," says Ilse.

The compact proportions did cause a few hiccups though, the planters being too big to fit through the limited access to the garden and having to be hauled over a boundary fence.

An existing cherry tree that cast shade over the garden was given a drastic pruning, its wood supplying the first logs for the new wood store. Boulders added to the natural feel and, in line with the garden's eco credentials, the largest being repurposed from a Japanese garden that

WELCOMING WILDLIFE

Ilse was immediately smitten with David's design. "He listened to me and what I wanted from the garden and described what I could expect," she says. "I loved the living walls and the natural materials, the huge Corten pots and the hidden raised beds and the choice of pollen-rich plants. He had the idea of creating a small, central patio area surrounded by planting and adding log storage and a bug hotel."

The new central patio would flow from the kitchen/diner so when the bifold doors were pulled back, Ilse's home connected seamlessly with the natural world outside. Because the garden was small and shallow, the design incorporated staggered screens to break up the

space and create a sense of depth, with recesses housing lighting to ensure the garden was usable into the evenings. Living walls on some of the screens provided extra greenery and plenty of nooks and crannies for wildlife, and also the feeling of a much deeper, bigger outdoor space. Behind these, raised planters were positioned for Ilse to grow salad leaves. Pebbles in among the paving would bring the shapes of a riverbed, while oversized Corten planters filled with bushy acers connected the garden to the trees in the woodland behind.

The design focused on using natural, sustainable materials that were ecologically sound, as well as wildlife-friendly. "The cobble base is far less environmentally demanding than

While browsing online, Ilse came across garden designer David Keegan (dkgardendesign.co.uk) who had created a garden for Salford Council. "I liked the way it was designed so users could sit and reflect there, so I emailed him and asked if he'd consider a smaller project," explains Ilse. And David relished the challenge.

"I could see the potential," he remembers. "Ilse wanted a calm oasis to relieve the pressure of her demanding job, a space that worked in harmony with nature and provided a home for insects and wildlife. The garden backed onto woodland which also gave me the opportunity to connect the garden with the trees beyond and create the illusion of greater depth."

HOW WE DID IT...



1

THE PLOT IS CLEARED and the framework for the new design is laid. Those planters have been hauled over the back wall!



2

THE PLANTERS ARE BUILT from hard southern pine, lined with plastic, and the framework for the living walls is created.



3

THE BUG HOUSE is made with wire grids to hold tree bark, straw and paper; the log store is constructed; and a weedproof membrane laid.



4

THE PAVING IS DOWN, the screens are in, and topsoil and gravel added. Work begins on the decking outside the bifold doors.



5

ROUNDED PEBBLES of different sizes cover the ground surface, the steel planters are positioned, and the decking is finished.



6

THE LIVING WALLS ARE PLANTED UP with foliage, while the salad planters concealed behind the screens are yet to be filled.

GARDEN MAKEOVER

was being rebuilt. To tie the scheme together, some of the smaller boulders feature rust-coloured veining that tones with the big Corten planters, and stone-effect seats are a genius touch. “The boulders are a brilliant addition as birds and squirrels, as well as the neighbours’ cats, love to sit on them!” says Ilse. “David had the idea of including the ‘living stones’ as seen on a furniture design website, and I loved them so much in the garden that I now have them in the house too.”

As well as providing year-round interest for Ilse, the planting scheme needed to supply food for the insects who would make this garden their home. “To make the bug hotel work, the planting needed to be designed around nectar-rich plants,” explains David. “I chose various kinds of echinacea, salvia, *Verbena bonariensis* and astrantia, plus other plants which were also useful to Ilse, like a variety of herbs.” There are also many different ferns to tie the garden into its woodland setting.

SAFE HAVEN

The volume of wildlife that now visits this garden is testament to its success, and the bug house is home to butterflies, moths, bees and ladybirds. Ilse is also delighted with her new outside space. “I love to sit out here reading books and newspapers, listening to music and chilling out after work,” she smiles. “When the bifold doors are open, the garden is an extension of the house – the wood decking outside lines up perfectly with the wooden floor indoors to give the illusion that it’s seamless. And the wooden cladding has aged and turned a beautiful shade of silver, which looks wonderful with the lights on at night.”

This quiet haven brings Ilse solace as well as joy. “I have a demanding job and the garden has been my sanctuary during the lockdowns,” she shares. “I can do as little or as much gardening as I like and have the satisfaction of eating some of my own produce. Every corner of the garden has its own special something for me.”

David's tips to make your garden eco-friendly

💡 **Install rainwater butts to cut down on the need to use tap water – it's better for your houseplants too.**

💡 **Think about the long-term impact of using a material in your garden. I use a lot of porcelain paving as it doesn't need harmful chemicals to keep it clean.**

💡 **There is a ready supply of reclaimed material in reclamation yards up and down the country – see what you can find before ordering new.**

💡 **Cut ground-level openings in fencing on each boundary to let hedgehogs in – they'll repay the favour by eating your snails!**



Welcome wildlife

David has chosen pollen-rich plants that are left to seed, providing winter shelter for insects and sustenance for birds. “All our gardens should aim to appeal to a broad range of insect life,” he says.

* *Allium sphaerocephalon*

These little green drumsticks that gradually mature to red are a feast for all pollinators in May/June.

* Echinacea 'White Swan'

Birds will devour the seeds of this easy-grow bloom once its nectar-rich flowers with elegant, drooping petals have faded.

* Astrantia 'Hadspen Blood'

Moths as well as butterflies and bees will feed on these richly coloured pincushions atop maroon stems.

* Miss Willmott's Ghost

Pollinators including beetles will flock to this metre-high eryngium, its sturdy seedheads lasting into winter for valuable shelter.

* *Acanthus spinosus*

Spiny bear's breech has spires of nectar-rich white and purple flowers that grow to over a metre tall, feeding a lot of bees in a relatively small space.

* Echinacea 'Kim's Knee High'

This dinky form grows to a compact 60cm high, lasts all summer, and is a particular favourite with butterflies.

