

“Relaxing up here in evening sunshine is a dream”

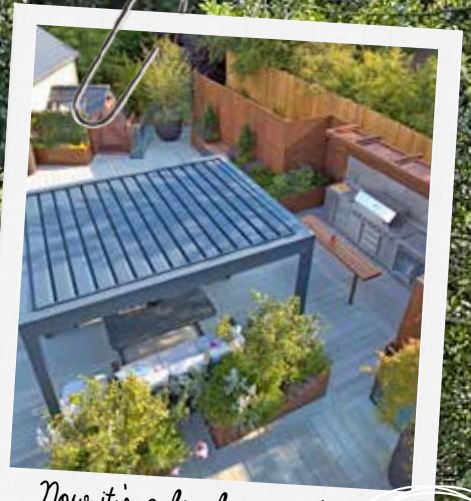
An uninspiring Cheshire roof terrace has been transformed into a **VIBRANT AND VERSATILE** outside space for Philip and Samantha Todd

GARDEN makeover



BEFORE

The roof garden was long and narrow with a slippery wooden deck



AFTER

Now it's a lovely space to relax and entertain

SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

- ✓ **ATTACH CASTORS** to outdoor appliances so it's easy to clean behind them.
- ✓ **MAKE A HIGH BAR** with stools to perch on for pre-dinner drinks.
- ✓ **LAY DECKING** in different directions to create subtle zones.



Japanese maple

Lavender Munstead

Japanese cedar

Snowy mespilus

Bought for its stunning location on the outskirts of Alderley Edge in Cheshire, Philip and Samantha Todd's house had a roof garden opening out from the master bedroom, with beautiful views. But there was nothing appealing about its layout. The terrace was long and narrow without a plant in sight, rusty railings on each side and a dangerously slippery wooden floor and outside staircase.

Before committing to a redesign, the couple lived with the unloved terrace for two years so they could experience all the seasons and the changing weather and light and work out exactly what they wanted from

this potentially fabulous outside space. “We wanted to walk straight out of the bedroom in the morning onto the roof terrace, and also to entertain and cook for people throughout the day,” says Samantha. “And the space needed to be accessible from the rear of the house, because we didn't want all our guests coming through the master bedroom.”

The couple had used designer David Keegan (dkgardendesign.co.uk) to redesign their garden in their previous house, so there was no deliberation about who they'd call on to transform this dowdy terrace into a relaxing haven. David's first impressions were of a rundown space accessed by a very

FEATURE: MELANIE WHITEHOUSE
PHOTOS: DAVID KEEGAN/JOHN WILKES



Want to add a wow-factor dining area? Turn to p18

Fusion 4 Cube Sofa & Dining Combo, £2,305, modafurnishings.co.uk

FABULOUS VIEWS accompany dinner every night!



BEFORE

This dismal spot didn't afford guests any home comforts!



Samantha & Philip's new space is perfect for two but great to share

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION Cheshire

THE LOOK Relaxed, contemporary

SITE Size 93m² **Faces** All ways

Soil A lightweight formulation for planters in roof gardens

OUR BUDGET

Decking **£23,750.30**

Paving **£3,983.04** Pergola **£17,974**

Lighting **£1,482.22** Woodburner

£2,238 Screens **£11,941**

Lifting equipment hire **£1,280**

Table **£1,775** Planters & pots **£18,130**

TOTAL: £82,553.56

HOW LONG IT TOOK

11 months, due to delays caused by the pandemic

narrow timber staircase, with wooden surfaces so slippery that they were dangerous. "But the potential was amazing," he says. "I loved the opportunity the roof space offered with its wonderful views of the countryside."

Of course, creating a high-level garden is far more complex than redesigning your average plot. "Designing a roof garden is a very different discipline to designing a ground-level garden," says David. "It involves complex load-bearing structural issues as well as considering the impact of wind drag."

WEIGHTY ISSUES

The challenge was to ensure that these issues didn't constrict the design. "Aesthetically, my aim was to design a year-round space with a pergola that included integrated heating. Given the distance from the downstairs kitchen to the roof garden, it was also important to include a sink plus an outdoor fridge and lots of under-counter kitchen storage," explains David.

Working with the architect and structural engineer, David designed the canopy over the kitchen area and the slatted horizontal screens. Wanting to use Corten steel for the screens to mirror the tones of the surrounding landscape, but unable to because of the weight, David's solution was to use fibreglass coated with a RAL colour to emulate the rusty tones. A similar approach was taken with the large planting troughs, which are made from glass-reinforced

plastic coated in a Corten resin. "And due to the size of the plant pot with the silver birch, the engineer added a concrete raft below the deck to support it," says David.

But the end result of all David's hard work received a huge 'wow' from his clients. "We were delighted with his original concept, which fully utilised and maximised the potential of the space," says Samantha.

HIGH LIFE

Work started in June 2020, amid large-scale renovations to the house. "Managing the different requirements between the builders and the roof garden teams was difficult at times," says Samantha. "The biggest issue was ensuring the waterproof membrane under the composite decking was installed correctly, as it sits over the study and the lounge below, and we had many delays."



BUTTERFLIES flock to the lavender.

Covid also caused supply issues, so the couple had to wait longer than expected for their terrace transformation, the work finally finishing in April 2021. "It was very exciting watching it take shape.

Once the pots arrived and the planting began, we could see it was on a bigger and grander scale than we'd first envisaged," says Samantha. "It far exceeded our original expectations. We hadn't thought of using the space in this way – we'd seen it more as a simpler, seating area and sunbathing terrace."

The design incorporates a seating/dining area that seats up to 10, and there's a barbecue and a pizza oven, alongside a herb garden and a high bar area for food prep. "And the stocked fridge is paramount as it's a lengthy walk to the main kitchen in the house," adds Samantha.

"Now we can use the roof garden as a great place to relax throughout the day, with a coffee in the morning, an afternoon snooze on the



Smoked Oak Millboard Decking, £138.24/m², millboard.co.uk



Kitchen appliances, all myoutdoorKitchen.co.uk

Fancy a new barbecue? Turn to p15

Polished Concrete Porcelain Paving, £50.16/m², londonstone.co.uk

A HERB GARDEN in the outdoor kitchen ensures delicious dishes.

How we did it...



The roof terrace is extended outwards – the doorway you can see here connects to the master bedroom.



The waterproof membrane is laid, ready for the porcelain paving and Millboard decking to go down.



The uprights that will eventually support the horizontal cladding and the pergola are fixed in place.



A substantial glass balustrade is added, with tall pots from ateliervierkant.com adding privacy, and the pergola is in.

"I loved the opportunity the roof space and views offered"

GARDEN MAKEOVER

sofa, and drinks and food with friends in the evening,” she continues. “The outdoor kitchen and inbuilt speakers make for a great entertaining space. And the pergola’s built-in heaters and outdoor fireplace/pizza oven mean we can sit in comfort whatever the weather, enjoying the extensive views from the city of Manchester to the Derbyshire hills on a clear day. We’ll be buying bar stools for here to enjoy those views further and as somewhere to perch while chatting to the cook!”

GARDEN JOY

Tending the carefully chosen plants also brings pleasure. “Keeping the roof garden looking good is part of what we enjoy,” says Samantha. “David integrated tubing in the planters, which only has to be filled once or twice a week in warmer weather for water to reach the roots. We maintain some of the planters on a seasonal

basis to make the most of colour throughout the year, as this is a 12-months-of-the-year space.”

Key to the success of the design is how the terrace now works both as an extensive entertaining space for family and friends as well as a cosy spot for two to chat, read and unwind. “We can sit in peace listening to the wildlife or change the mood using the music system,” smiles Samantha. “At night, there are lights on the pergola and spotlights on the key plants and we can control these independently to set a particular scene.

“Sitting under the pergola with the breeze blowing, the evening sun shining, looking at the views with a glass of wine in hand, watching birds of prey circle and hearing the birds and insects, with a great song list playing, gives us a feeling of restfulness while being at one with nature. It is lovely to share with others but also great on your own.”

David's expert tips to make a roof garden

💡 **Employ the services of a structural engineer before you embark, to calculate the load-bearing requirements.**



💡 **Choose light planters (I used glass-reinforced plastic troughs from europlanters.com) and a specialist lightweight soil mix.**

💡 **Save endless trips to fetch cold drinks and wash up by installing an outdoor fridge and sink. And make sure there's an outdoor-approved socket so you can boil the kettle for a cup of tea.**

💡 **Quality slip-resistant decking is vital up high – I've used Millboard (millboard.co.uk) and it's made in the UK.**

Robust rooftop plants

Garden life with little protection from the sun, wind and rain is tough, so the plants need to be tough too! “Plants in a roof garden will dry out a lot faster than at ground level so install an irrigation system and use water-retaining gel,” advises David.

Pinus nigra
'Green Tower'

* Dwarf mountain pine

A slow-growing compact evergreen, *Pinus mugo* has dense needles and dinky cones, and shrugs off any weather!

* *Artemisia* 'Powis Castle'

With billows of divinely aromatic fern-like leaves that are almost silver, it loves the hot well-drained conditions on a rooftop.

* Lavender 'Munstead'

This compact variety grows to 45cm tall with loads of fragrant flowers and slender evergreen leaves. It basks in hot sun, so it's happy up high.

* Lamb's ear 'Big Ears'

The soft woolly leaves of this variety grow to 25cm long, and stroking one between finger and thumb is oh-so-relaxing!

* Himalayan birch

Choose a multi-stem tree to make the most of the fabulous white bark, which naturally peels for dazzling results. Pretty catkins too!

* *Pinus strobus* 'Tiny Kurls'

Another mini pine that's a must for a roof garden, this gem boasts spirals of stiff twisted needles in a glorious blue-green hue.

