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AT ONE WITH NATURE

AN ENTERTAINER'S PARADISE
IN RURAL HAMPSHIRE

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A POCKET LONDON GARDEN

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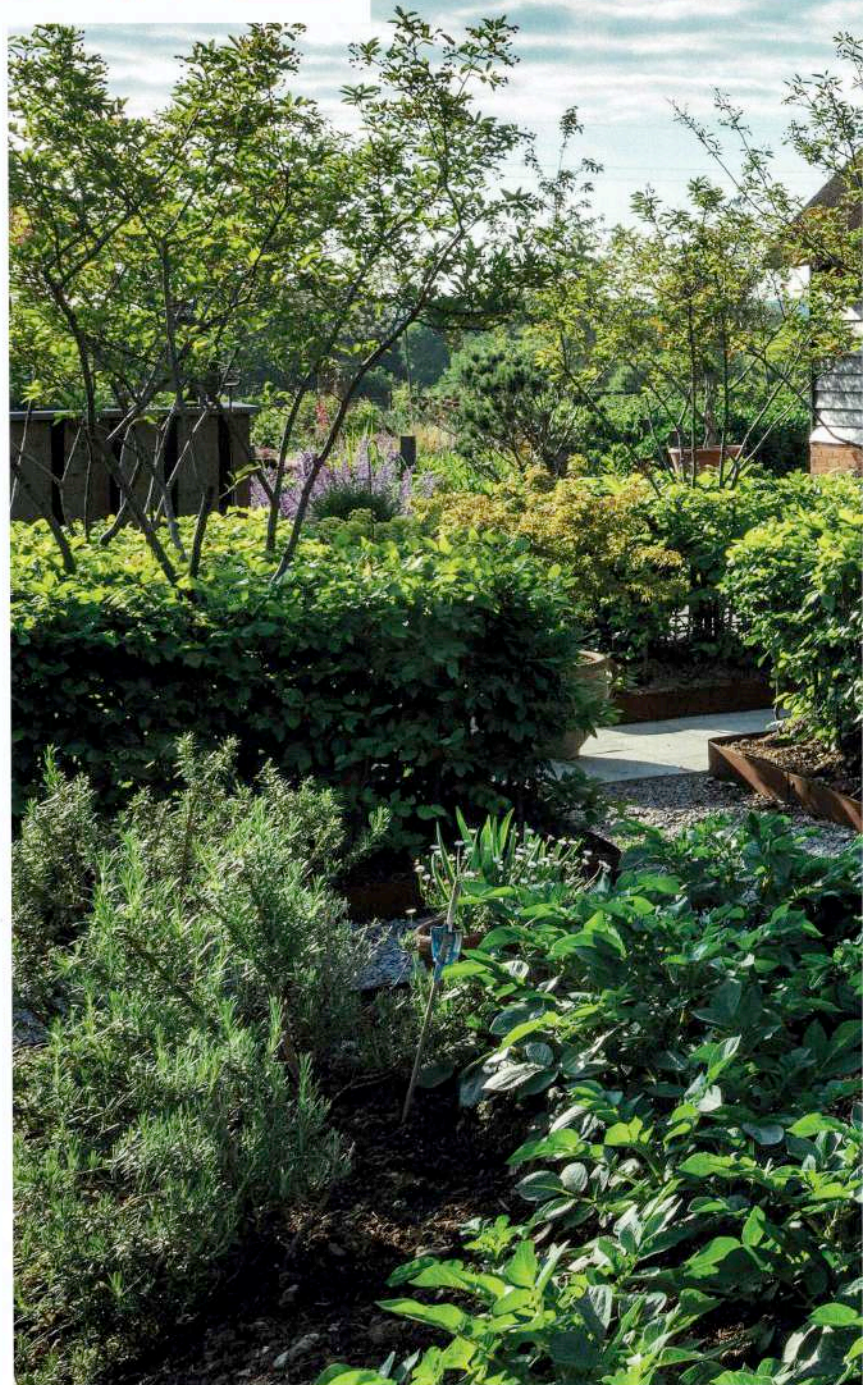
ENTERTAINING IN NATURE



Fiona Harrison MSGD's design for this rural setting in Hampshire combines natural and modernist elements that give the open site a delightful sense of intimacy and clever points of interest

WORDS: Ciar Byrne

PHOTOGRAPHS: Marianne Majerus



LEFT: Millboard smoked oak decking with Corten steel-edged planting beds and a quartered design of hornbeam cubes with multi-stemmed amelanchiers, which frame the rural view beyond. **FAR LEFT:** the Japanese-inspired Yatsuhashi boardwalk, with *Iris* 'Tropic Night' to mimic the effect of water, leads out to open lawn and a seating area on the garden boundary beyond that.





ABOVE LEFT AND BOTTOM RIGHT: the series of garden rooms is arranged so they draw you towards and away from the house. **TOP RIGHT:** Fiona's pergola design of black-painted oak posts and cross beams, with stainless steel cabling that supports a wisteria.

The best clients are those who give a clear brief and a free rein. Such was the case with Lois and Patrick Bellew, when they asked Fiona Harrison MSGD to turn their 0.7-acre garden, a windswept L-shaped lawn that wraps around their converted barn in north-east Hampshire, into something more intimate and inviting.

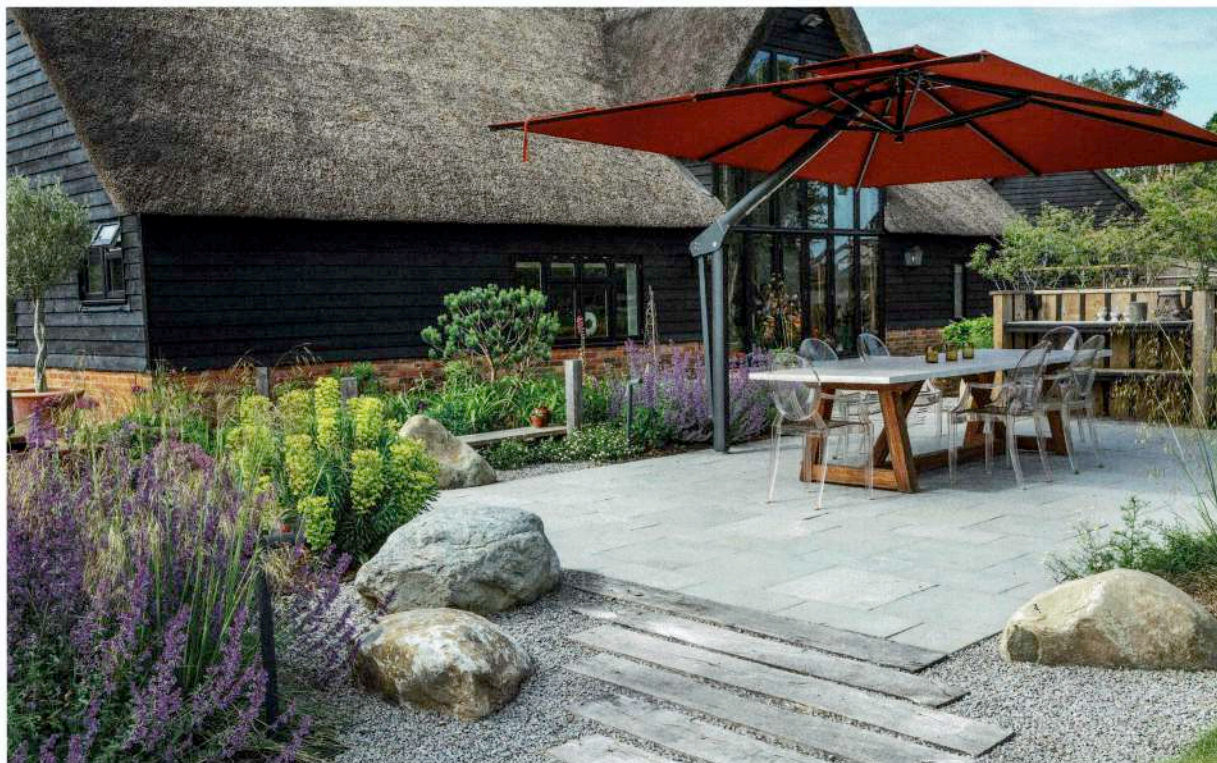
Being able to entertain outside comfortably, and for large numbers, was an important factor for the couple, and they wanted the garden to evoke elements of Japanese and Italian gardens they had enjoyed during recent visits to those countries. Also, Lois, a textile designer and keen gardener, wanted there to be an

interesting palette of plants for her to look after, rather than a formulaic low-maintenance planting scheme.

'Patrick and Lois had travelled quite a bit and wanted to put some of their travel memories into the garden,' says Fiona. 'Also, they'd already had a big family wedding in the garden and wanted to be able to use it for future and larger catered events.'

'They were very good at giving a brief,' she adds, 'but it was very much "Do what you like with it".'

Fiona's solution is a gridded, modernist-inspired layout of eating and seating areas arranged close to the back and one side of the house and surrounded by an expanse of lawn ringfenced by existing trees and a stretch of



LEFT: a drought-tolerant herbaceous planting scheme encloses the dining terrace without detaching it entirely from the rest of the garden, so the Bellevs and their guests can mingle while enjoying the views beyond. The rusted Corten steel water tank was recycled from another client's garden.



Fiona Harrison MSGD

studied horticulture at the University of Reading and Pershore Horticultural College before working for the National Trust. She set up Fiona Harrison Garden Design in 1992 and works on a broad range of residential and commercial projects for clients in the Home Counties, and further afield, from her base in Virginia Water, Surrey.

fionaharrisondesign.com

wildflower meadow that draws the eye to the open countryside beyond.

The back of the house faces north so finding a sunny spot was important. The Bellevs had already decided where they wanted to have the dining terrace, close to the north-east corner of the house, recalls Fiona, and to catch the midday and afternoon sun, she has positioned seating areas on either side of it, near the house, and on the garden's boundary. A path made of green oak railway sleepers and grey granite gravel acts as a link between the dining terrace and a sun deck on the far side of the lawn, which is arranged with a pair of outdoor sofas and enclosed by a screen of salix that Fiona transplanted from nearby.

'KEEPING THE DECORATIVE ELEMENTS CLOSE TO THE HOUSE AND LEAVING THE VIEWS OF THE LANDSCAPE AS UNCLUTTERED AS POSSIBLE WORKED WELL.'

The extensive views of the agricultural fields that surround the garden are also clearly visible through the sitting room's huge, panel-glazed wall in the gable at the back of the house, so Fiona added a low deck immediately outside and, beyond it, planted multi-stemmed amelanchiers into four clipped hornbeam cubes. Framing and channelling the view, the quartered design works as a nod to both the formal topiary gardens of Italy and the Zen gardens of Japan.

Global influences

To the far right of the deck and spanning the north-east corner of the house lies an element of the garden consisting of eight overlapping planks that create a zig-zagged boardwalk. The feature was inspired by Yatsubashi bridges, a well-known motif in Japanese art and literature, and instead of water, Fiona has mimicked the effect with plantings of blue *Iris* 'Tropic Night' around the boards.

On the east side of the house, a fragrant walkway, with wisteria clambering over a black-stained timber and metal pergola perhaps owes more to the gardens of Italy. Elsewhere, large glacial boulders that were →