

DESIGN SPECIAL

A tale of two gardens

An appealing front garden for a 1950s build in Fife and, overleaf, a city-centre sanctuary for post-work relaxation

Photography Coppermango Photography and Carolyn Grohmann Words Miriam Methuen-Jones

In suburbia

“This was an interesting project from the start,” says Lisa Lempink, who devised this handsome front garden in Fife. “The house was designed by the architect Michael Laird and built in the early 1950s; it’s an unusual style of house and has a beautiful, tasteful interior.” The front garden, in contrast, was a complete blank canvas, with lots of open space and an oddly shaped lawn. Despite this, Lisa could see the potential for something special.

“The clients wanted a low-maintenance garden with a relaxed feel and diffuse screening. Curves and fluid organic shapes were favoured. I did exactly that – something stylish and in keeping with the house, but wildlife-friendly.”

She started by creating a perfect circle as the central feature, with the driveway curving around it. The circle encompasses an impressive 240 square metres – a generous area, which might have seemed daunting to fill. Happily, the unusual house supplied plenty of inspiration and Lisa allowed its style to guide her scheme. A repeated geometric pattern was formed with the planting, keeping things cohesive and pleasing to the eye.

“I used a plentiful mix of ornamental grasses and flowering shrubs to ensure there is colour, structure and interest all year,” Lisa explains. “Some of the grasses were chosen for their swish, some for the rustling sound they

make, and all for their individual colours: a good mix of red, blue, purple, pink and even some yellow.”

The planting on both sides of the circle is broken up by sandstone pavers and sections of lawn. Global Stone sandstone paving was chosen, with complementary granite setts used to divide up areas of gravel. Metal edging separates the lawn and the soil borders. “The lawn adds a softness, along with the planting; otherwise, in a large space like this, you’re in danger of having too much hard landscaping and turning the area into a car park.”

The whole process took about a year, including having the driveway completely redone. Despite the complex planting scheme (including five varieties of ornamental grasses and more than a dozen different shrubs) maintenance is only really required three times a year to keep things in check.

“All gardens change over time – that’s the nature of the beast,” says Lisa. “Some plants will do better than others due to a range of factors, and the odd one or two may be replaced over time. Weather conditions affect what thrives, but things can change organically year to year.”

The resulting front garden is more than worthy of the impressive house it frames. The patchwork of grasses feels relaxed and organic, providing some serious kerb appeal.



BRIEF To redesign a front garden with an emphasis on low maintenance and year-round interest

BUDGET £22,000, including driveway

DESIGN Lempink Garden Design

LANDSCAPER Dave Dunn of Concept Landscaping



Top Planting includes *Perovskia* 'Blue Spire', *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Great Star', *Fuchsia* 'Alice Hoffman' and the bright red *Cornus alba* 'Sibirica'. **This image** The detached villa is now surrounded by suitably interesting planting