

SMART IDEAS TO STEAL

- ✓ **ADD LINES OF POLES** painted in your favourite colour to flowerbeds.
- ✓ **BUILD A SIMPLE FRAME** of sleepers and fill with pebbles to house your firepit.
- ✓ **PLANT GRASSES** amid a mix of rounded stones and pebbles for an easy-maintenance, beach-inspired bed.

THE GRAVEL PAVING is permeable and eco-friendly. Old English Self Binding Gravel, £128.34/850kg mainlandaggregates.co.uk

A CORTEN STEEL WATER FEATURE bubbles away providing a peaceful background sound. Round Water Pool, from £1,000.95 worm.co.uk

SLATE PAVING defines the area. Nordus slate paving, £39.43/m², granite setts, £94.62/m² turnbullsonline.co.uk

Hardy geranium

Miscanthus grass

Japanese maple

GOOD IDEA! Different types of paving provide textural interest throughout the garden

CLIMBERS such as honeysuckle and jasmine add colour to the uprights of the loggia that frames the back of the house.

READER GARDEN Makeover

TIP Framing pathways and linking areas using freestanding pergolas adds vertical interest



The garden was a bare rectangle, laid to lawn and overlooked

“It’s great to go outside without having to put our wellies on!”

Carol and Jan Cole have turned a boggy new-build plot into an **ALL-WEATHER SPACE** with clever accents of their favourite shade

There was nothing inspirational about the rectangular, flat garden that Carol and Jan Cole inherited when they bought their new arts and craft-style house. With standard fencing down each side, turf in the middle and a small patio outside the back doors, it was typical of any new build anywhere in the country – but the potential to create something gorgeous was all there.

“When we moved here in 2017, the garden was just mud,” recalls Carol. “We had to wear wellies every time we went outside!” But enjoying life outdoors means a lot to the couple, so creating a functional outside space was top of their priority list. “We wanted a pretty garden with various patios to make the most of it being south facing,” Carol adds. “We wanted to be able to have parties, drinks and barbecues outside with friends, and we needed a pergola to break up the flatness of the house across the back. Previously, we’d had a very small back garden and it was paved but still lovely, with an

acer and an old brick wall, and we wanted something like that again.”

Knowing the task was too big for the two of them to tackle, Carol found garden designer Darren Rudge (darrenrudge.co.uk) online. “He had a nice friendly face and I was impressed with his horticultural knowledge,” says Carol.

THE COLOUR PURPLE

Darren, a BBC radio presenter known as ‘The Laughing Gardener’, was instantly aware of certain problems that he would have to overcome in his design. “The brief was to create a space that made the garden seem bigger, cut out some of the views because the clients felt overlooked and apply a theme of wildlife, recycling and sustainability,” he explains.

“The view is dominated by the rear fencing, so the aim was to draw the eye away from this, giving a journey through the garden and creating the illusion of it being wider than it is,” Darren adds. “The design featured a few seating

areas linked by pathways leading to and from the main patio areas. Planted areas situated on both sides of the pathways would give an illusion of space and soften the hard landscape elements of the garden.”

It was agreed that Carol’s favourite colour purple was to be reflected in the planting and other materials. And this was the inspiration for the ripple of purple poles that run across the garden, linking the different areas and adding to the widening effect. “As the poles progress through the garden in a regular pattern, they cross pathways, unifying zones and drawing the

THE OWNERS’ NAMES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO PROTECT PRIVACY

FEATURE: MELANIE WHITEHOUSE. PHOTOS: DARREN RUDGE (@DARRENURDGE.CO.UK)/CAROL COLE



Carol and Jan Cole when they moved into their new home

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

Shropshire

THE LOOK

Contemporary, reclaimed and recycled with an element of shabby chic

SITE & SOIL

Size 12.5 x 11.5m Faces South
Soil Heavy clay

OUR BUDGET

Paving **£7,500** Raised beds **£800**
Pergola **£250** Turf **£300**
Plants **£4,500** Water feature **£1,100**
Lighting **£900** Purple poles plus
paint **£250** Labour **£4,000**
TOTAL: £19,600

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Paving **3 weeks** Raised beds **1 week**
Pergola **2.5 days** Planting **1 week**
Water feature **1 day** Lighting **4 days**
Turf **1 day**
TOTAL: Just over 6 weeks

HOW WE DID IT...



1

THE LAWN IS DUG UP and some of the heavy clay soil is removed ready for new topsoil and horticultural gravel.



2

PATHS AND PAVING are laid to create the structure of the garden. Vertical sleepers help to add privacy and a sense of protection.



3

SUBSTANTIAL RAISED BEDS are built, including one to house a firepit in the squared seating area, and the turf is laid.



4

A WATER FEATURE in rusty Corten steel is installed, sitting nicely with the industrial style of the sleeper beds.



5

THE OPEN PERGOLA is built and the poles are in, creating a linking device that lures the eye through the beds.



6

THE PLANTS GO IN, with grasses, shrubs and trees carefully chosen to complement the colours and textures of the hard landscaping.

eye across the space, inviting you to explore the spaces created," explains Darren. "I had a bespoke purple paint mixed for the poles that I call 'Carol's Purple!'"

WORK BEGINS

Heavy clay subsoil was causing the ground to become waterlogged, so horticultural gravel and fresh topsoil were brought in to ensure the planted areas wouldn't flood. Darren and his team began work in late September, with the patios, paths and paving going in first. The main patio is made from slate paving, from which pathways radiate out using Breedon self-binding gravel and reclaimed granite set edgings. The Breedon is a softer paving material, which is sustainable and permeable, allowing rain to pass through, so it fitted in with the garden's eco-friendly theme.

The raised beds, pergola and lighting were added next, with simple, adjustable spike lights in all the borders to uplift foliage. "The vertical sleepers around the seating area create a place to sit that's not overlooked by properties to the side and rear. It also adds a greater feeling of protection," says Darren.

The industrial-style Corten steel water feature followed – a big, heavy drum, which took a lot of manoeuvring into place. "The shape reflects the curves and angles of the garden and the rusty, weather-worn style complements the Corten firepit," says Darren.

"I like the use of texture throughout – all the different pebbles, pavers and gravel," Carol adds, "and the timbers used around the seating area and on the raised beds are weathering well."

PLANTS FOR WILDLIFE

A contemporary planting style morphs into a more wildlife-friendly theme around the edges of the garden. A cherry and a golden false acacia (*Robinia pseudoacacia*) tree became focal points, and shrubs including rhododendrons, azaleas, witch hazel, buddleia, red and golden stemmed dogwood (*Cornus*) and bamboo provide birds with nesting sites as well as offering the couple the privacy they wished for. Foxgloves, Siberian bugloss (*Brunnera*

Time to grow

When you use young plants to fill a new garden, it may look a little sparse for the first year, but it's a far cheaper way to get a plot filled with colour, shape and texture. Think about where it's worth spending a little more to get a mature, larger plant, such as a tree for instant privacy. When you're using young plants, it's important to consider what effect you want to achieve once they're fully grown and position them accordingly. "Some planting schemes are open and loose and others close and compact, while here the eventual scheme was for the plants to blend in naturalistic waves," explains designer Darren. "It pays to do research and find out a little about how the plants will grow."



macrophylla), lady's mantle and penstemon are all magnets for bees and butterflies, while heuchera and grasses such as stipa, fescue and miscanthus provide sheltered nooks and crannies for insects.

The pergola links the house with the garden, and clematis, honeysuckle and jasmine are trained up against the poles. One of these poles runs into the raised sleeper bed, adding to the flow from the house into the garden space.

BONFIRE NIGHT PARTY

The finish date was coincided to time with November 5th, when the garden was officially opened to family and friends with a big party. "My favourite bit is the seating area around the firepit, which gets the evening sun and is a great place to relax with drinks," says Carol.

"The lighting looks lovely at night and everyone thinks it's beautiful. What's more, it's great to be able to go outside without putting on my wellies!"

JEEPERS CREEPERS, just look at these sleepers! Upright timbers create a secluded seating area.



READER GARDEN

Discover new ways to use sleepers in your plot on p57

Strictly Lamps Adjustable Spike Light, £.25, ebay.co.uk



THE SWEEPING LINE of wooden poles were painted in a bespoke Dulux shade mixed especially for Carol.

WINTER WARMTH Bright purple poles contrast with the rich tones of Corten steel and wooden sleepers for year-round colour



A BEACHY MIX of pebbles in various sizes surround the water feature.