

AFTER

TRELLIS ADDS
height, privacy
and a frame for more
greenery to grow up.

1

**MOROCCAN-
STYLE** wall lamps light
the new seating area once
the sun goes down.

2

Reader
MAKEOVER

***“We never thought we
could love this garden!”***

SARAH AND DAVID MATTHEWS made the most of limited
sunlight to turn a dark garden into a welcoming space to entertain

READER GARDEN

BEFORE



Sarah and David were put off by this cramped, gloomy space.

MY GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

"We wanted to transform the small, gloomy garden of our Victorian house in west London to make it feel light, inviting, spacious and suitable for entertaining our friends."

THE LOOK

Natural with lots of seasonal interest

SITE & SOIL

Size 10.5m x 5.5m (34ft x 18ft)

Faces North
Soil type Heavy clay

OUR BUDGET

Excavation, groundwork, preparation and levelling **£7,000**
Brick patio **£3,000**
Brick and raised bed rendering **£5,000**
Artificial grass **£2,000**
Brick detail and edging **£2,000**
Trellis and barbecue **£5,000**
Decking and bespoke bench **£6,000**
Planting **£4,000**
TOTAL £34,000

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Patio **3 days**
Brick and raised bed rendering **5 days**
Laying the fake grass **2 days**
Brick details and edging **2 days**
Trellis and barbecue **4 days**
Decking and bespoke bench **5 days**
Planting **3 days**
TOTAL 24 DAYS

ARTIFICIAL
grass 'thrives' where a real lawn would struggle from heavy soil and lack of light.

3

RECLAIMED
bricks theme the garden, linking the raised beds, lawn edging and house.

4

NOW THE GARDEN
feels like an extension of the house, to enjoy all year.

WORDS: GAP PHOTOS/PAUL DEBOIS DESIGN: LIVING COLOUR GARDENS/JAMES WALSH WWW.LIVINGCOLOURGARDENS.CO.UK



▲ **DAVID LOVES COOKING** on the bespoke barbecue made from the same bricks as used in the rest of the garden. With the oak decking and seating area it feels like an extra room.

Sarah and David Matthews moved to their home in Brook Green, west London, five years ago but they had some serious reservations about the tiny garden that they'd inherited. Dark, with little sunlight, the previous owners had built unattractive concrete beds at sharp angles to the house.

"The space was just so depressing. There was nowhere to sit and relax, nowhere for children to play, and no flowers. When we first saw the house I really did think the garden was a deal breaker and that we could not live there because it felt so gloomy and cramped. But we managed to put up with it for three years before deciding that we had to do something," explains David.

With a young child (now two), and David's demanding job as a hedge fund manager, the couple decided to seek expert help. After recommendations from local families, they chose design team Living Colour Gardens to do the work.

Designer James Walsh admits that it was a challenging task. "The kitchen has bi-fold doors which open up to the garden and make it visible all year round so it was crucial to make it flow



'MOUNT TACOMA' brings spots of light to the raised borders.

THE ARTIFICIAL lawn looks green and well-kept all year round.

"Perhaps my favourite season is spring, when all the bulbs pop up after a long winter"

together. But there was very little sunlight and what there was only hit the very back of the garden," he says. "As we worked through the design ideas, we decided that we should take advantage of that fact and create a seating area and focal point there.

"The aim was to keep the garden looking as natural as possible, framing the grass with brick edging using reclaimed bricks that tie in well with the new raised beds and perimeter wall. Sarah and David wanted to keep the planting quite wild, with lots of seasonal interest."

David loves cooking outside, and the couple enjoy entertaining friends, so making the garden feel like an extension of their home was top of their wish list. James achieved this by using oak decking boards and building a bespoke barbecue and seating area near to the house.

Once the design decisions were agreed, the work started. "We created and built raised beds using the same brick as the house, which makes them look as if they have always been there," says James. "We also had to think hard about how best to showcase plants in this tiny and often sunless spot, so we added an antique mirror to the back wall which not only makes the space look and feel bigger but doubles the impact of the planting."

The couple wanted a lawn but the lack of light, and heavy clay soil, meant that a real one would be hard to achieve and even more tricky to maintain. "The artificial grass works as the children are so tiny, they can safely crawl on it in summer and even in winter," says James. "It's edged with reclaimed bricks to link with the house and the beds, and it looks pristine all year."



The pergola creates a frame for plants to climb, making the most of this small space

PERSONAL TOUCH

Bespoke elements such as the bench and brickwork connect the garden in a unique way

TULIPS like 'Angelique' fill this small plot in spring, Sarah's favourite season.



A LARGE MIRROR reflects plants and light, making the plot seem bigger.



The planting has been kept simple, with something for every season. In spring there are lots of bulbs including alliums, tulips and crocus. In summer there's a blue and white theme with geraniums, climbing roses, clematis, jasmine, salvia and alchemilla. Then, in autumn, the two small amelanchier trees are beautiful with their orange and brown foliage. During the winter and all year round there are plenty of evergreen shrubs for structure, including easy to care for box balls.

"Perhaps my favourite season is spring, when all the bulbs pop up after a long winter and the garden seems to come to life," says Sarah. "We spend a lot of time at the kitchen table, looking at what's happening out there. When it gets warmer, we'll get out the cushions and lounge on the bespoke oak benches. In high summer, we love having friends round and entertaining at the back of the garden under the pergola which supports gorgeous roses and scented jasmine. It really is a garden for all seasons."

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