

# Different angles

*An angled garden in Edinburgh has been filled with flowers and edibles to make the most of its awkward shape*

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Behind a curve in Edinburgh's elegant Eton Terrace is a long, narrow garden that sits at a sharp angle to the house and ends in a point at the far end. The owners wanted a garden with flowers and vegetables, where they could enjoy Scotland's long summer evenings and sit out in comfort even in the depths of winter. Yet for designer Carolyn Grohmann the biggest challenge in realising their vision was neither the size of the garden nor the impoverished soil, but the fact that the only access was a narrow lane with borders that were beautifully planted and carefully tended by neighbours. It took several attempts to manoeuvre a mini digger on to the site without mishap, but finally the work of creating the garden could begin.

In narrow gardens, emphasising the diagonal axis can make the space seem wider, but Carolyn has taken that device a step further, basing the layout around a sectional slice of a flower, with petal-shaped raised beds radiating out from a terrace close to the house. The beds, made from woven rebar, chosen for its thinness and durability, are large to prevent them from drying out, and are packed with plants to suppress weeds and reduce evaporation. "Raised beds also add height, so that sitting among them in summer you get the sense of being submerged in flowers," says Carolyn.

Small, delicate trees such as *Acer palmatum* 'Osakazuki' create a lacy canopy that helps provide additional privacy, and the large bowl, made by Urbis, that occupies the 'eye' of the flower is surrounded by a curved wall, topped with scorched oak to create a comfortable bench.

In small gardens every detail is important, so the bench has been made from oak heartwood, which doesn't leach tannins; the sawn sandstone on the patio was chosen to match the polished limestone of the

Woven rebar raised beds radiate out from the terrace, featuring evergreen grasses *Stipa tenuissima* and *Carex elata* 'Aurea', which mingle with bushy shrubs, clipped box balls and flowering perennials, such as *Persicaria affinis* 'Darjeeling Red', *Erigeron karvinskianus* and *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat').

## KEY ELEMENTS

**What** City walled garden.

**Where** Edinburgh.

**Soil** Loam with added topsoil.

**Size** 7m x 20m.

**Aspect** West facing.

**Special features** Petal-shaped raised beds, curved wall with scorched oak seating, pink Cedec gravel paths.

**Designed by** Carolyn Grohmann (secretgardensdesign.co.uk).







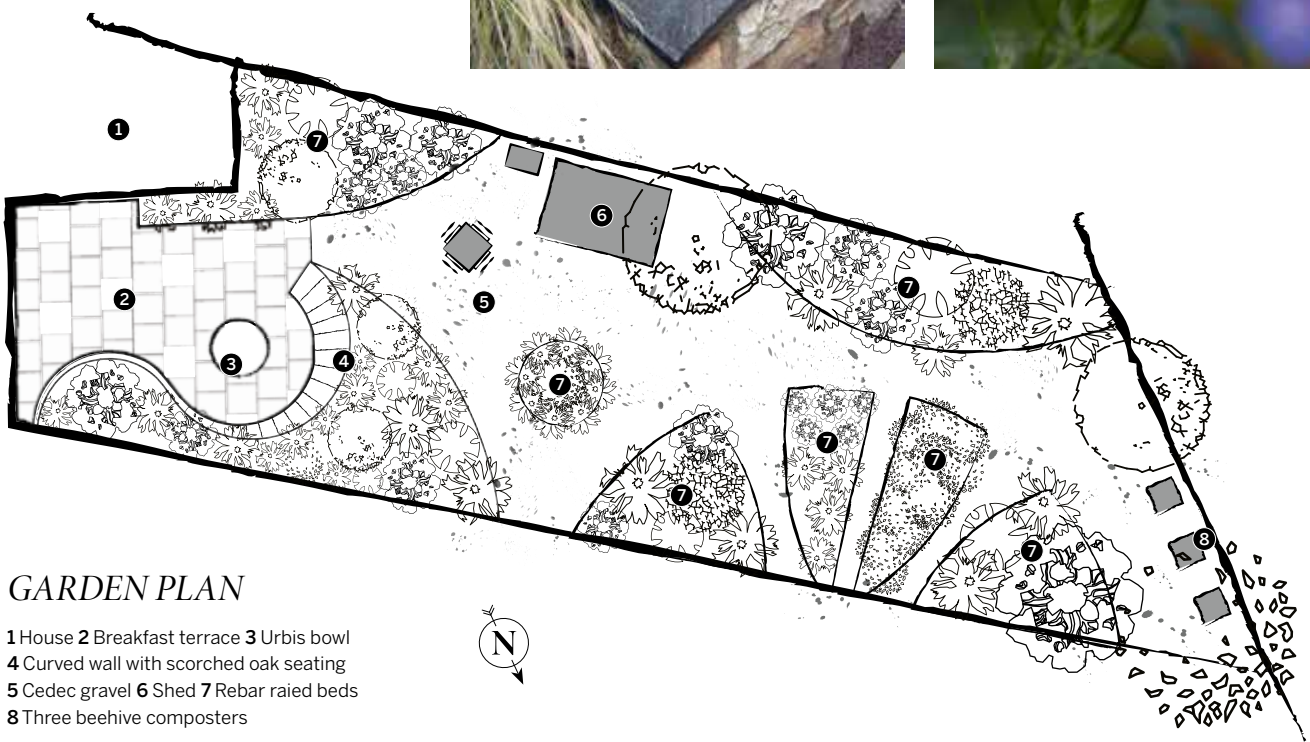
This page, clockwise from above  
A rebar raised bed filled with *Carex elata* 'Aurea'.

*Stipa tenuissima* growing behind the bench. In this sheltered position it is evergreen and only needs combing out in spring to remove old seedheads.

The Urbis bowl creates a calming focal point for this seating area. The bowl's 1.2m diameter allows it to function perfectly as a pond, and could be used to grow dwarf waterlilies.

*Astrantia major* 'Large White' grows in shadier corners of the garden where it enjoys moist soil and dappled light, but it will thrive almost anywhere.

Stone left over from the refurbishment of the house has been used to form the curved bench. The scorched oak heartwood top was chosen for its strength and durability.



## GARDEN PLAN

- 1 House 2 Breakfast terrace 3 Urbis bowl  
4 Curved wall with scorched oak seating  
5 Cedec gravel 6 Shed 7 Rebar raised beds  
8 Three beehive composters



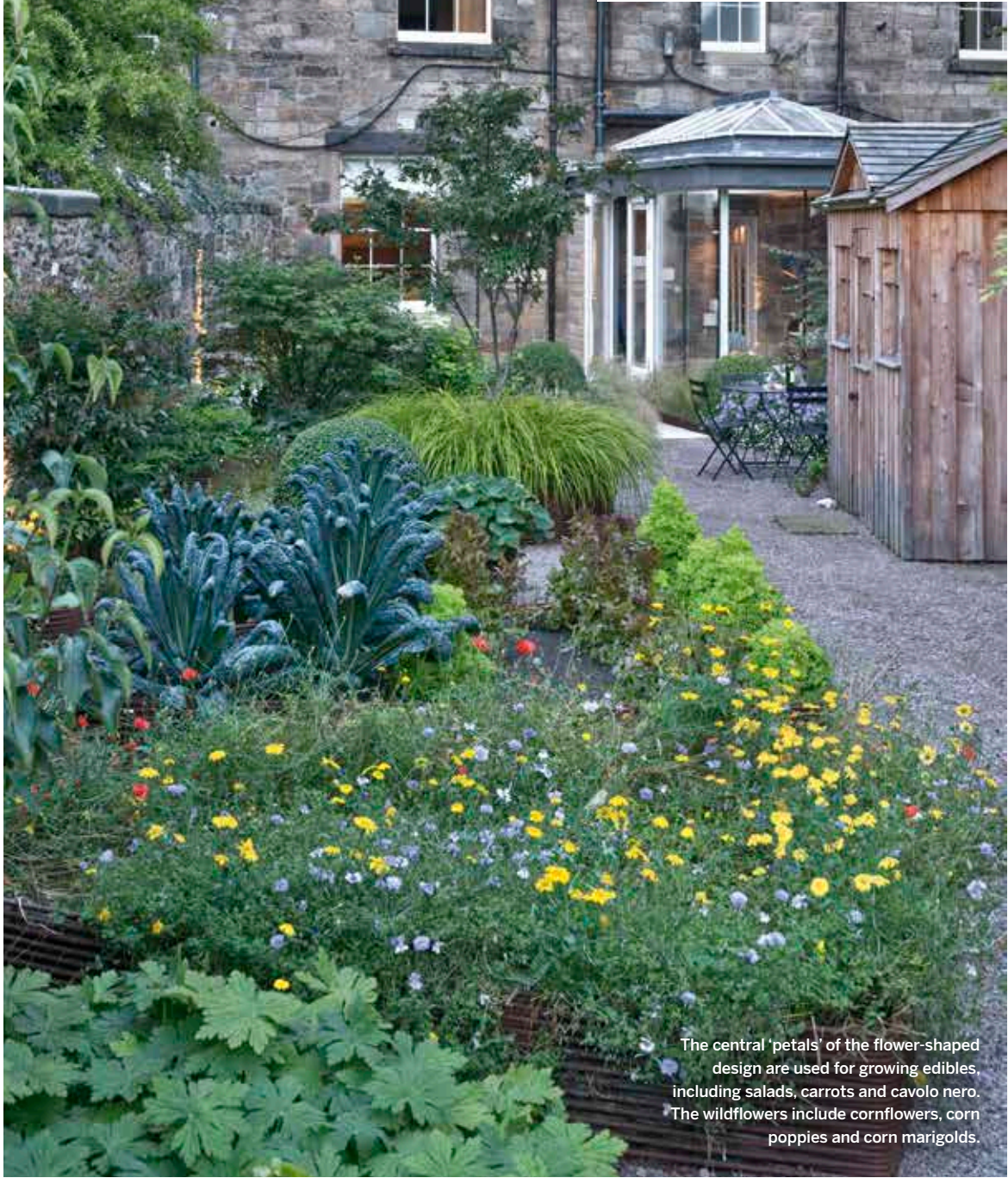
## MAKING THE MOST OF A SMALL SPACE

**Have several focal points** and 'stopping-off' points throughout the garden, avoiding a straight line to the back wall.

**Use materials that work with the existing structure.** The rust tones of the bowl and raised beds, and the pink of the Cedec gravel, can all be found in the random rubble walls that surround the garden.

**Texture is equally as important as colour.** Putting different textures together can emphasise different finishes and adds another layer of interest.

**Make a feature of anything you can't hide,** such as compost bins shaped like beehives and an unashamedly traditional garden shed.



The central 'petals' of the flower-shaped design are used for growing edibles, including salads, carrots and cavolo nero. The wildflowers include cornflowers, corn poppies and corn marigolds.

▷ interior floor surface and the pink Cedec gravel on the paths tones with Edinburgh's soft-coloured sandstone. Meanwhile, the mortar on the walls is deliberately recessed so that the stones stand proud, and rather than smother them with climbers, Carolyn has emphasised their beauty by using them as a backdrop for specimen shrubs and trees and highlighting them with subtle uplighters.

Planting is frothy and romantic, with *Primula japonica* 'Apple Blossom' and *Paeonia* 'Claire de Lune', offset by oversized box balls and interspersed with grasses including *Stipa tenuissima* and *Carex elata* 'Aurea'. A multi-stemmed *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* occupies the space furthest from the house and in autumn the encroaching walls help to concentrate its toffee-apple scent. Small bulbs, including *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-Tête', provide colour early in the year and the show keeps going until *Geranium Rozanne* (= 'Gerwat') bows out in November.

A handsome shed made from Scottish larch and cedar shingles adds a traditional note and demonstrates the effectiveness of using an oversized feature in a small space. The shed also provides storage for the black Fermob furniture during the winter and both the garden door and the beehive-shaped compost bins that sit at the far end of the garden have been painted black in order to provide a sense of cohesion.

Despite spending part of the year abroad, the clients are deeply invested in the garden, and so too is Carolyn, who relishes her ongoing involvement in its progression. "In a small garden that's densely planted the role is akin to being the ringmaster in a circus," she explains. "You've got to curb the over-exuberant performers and create space for the shyer acts to flourish, so over the coming months we'll be looking at what needs to be cut back or moved and where we can add more colour." Roll up for the next act. □