

## Beyond the straight and narrow

How do you squeeze everything - patio, veg patch, raised beds, seating area and a shed - into a long garden? Agnes Stevenson visits an Edinburgh terrace to find out

Photographs: Andrea Jones



**E**ton Terrace, in the heart of New Town, Edinburgh, is an elegant curved street; as a result, one garden sits at a sharp angle to the house, coming to a point at the far end. It isn't a shape that lends itself readily to any obvious design, and fitting in all the features without ending up with a jumble was always going to be a challenge. Plonking a shed down one end and creating a straight path up the middle was never on the agenda. Instead, the owners decided to make the most of every inch: they wanted flowers, vegetables, a seating area, and raised beds.

Designer Carolyn Grohmann's plan is based on a sectional slice of a flower, with petal-shaped raised beds radiating out from a patio, which anchors the garden to the house. It's a bit of alchemy that reveals itself only from an upstairs window.

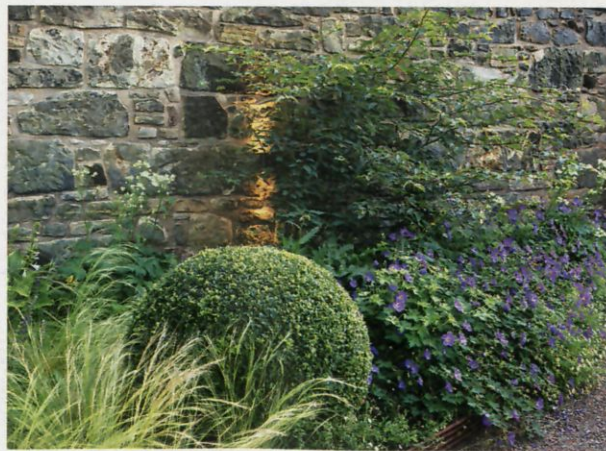
The beds have been created with rebar reinforcing rods used in the construction industry; when woven together they resemble rustic willow. They are filled with colour from when the first *Narcissus* 'Tête-à-tête' appears in February until *Geranium* 'Jolly Bee' bows out in November.

"Raised beds need to be big enough not to dry out quickly, so here they are substantial and packed with plants to keep down weeds and reduce evaporation from the soil surface," Grohmann says. The beds also create useful height, so that when a lacy canopy of foliage extends from the *Acer palmatum* 'Osakazuki' and other small trees chosen for their delicate appearance, the owners can sit in the garden in privacy.

A large lily bowl, made by Urbis, occupies the "eye" of the flower and is surrounded by a curved wall, topped with scorched oak to create a comfortable bench. Other furniture is by French company Fermob, and this, along with the door at the far end and the beehive-shaped compost bins, are finished in matt black to create a sense of cohesion.

The planting is gloriously romantic – a heady palette of perennials such as *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 *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* occupies the space farthest from the house and in autumn the encroaching walls help to concentrate its toffee apple scent.

The walls themselves are a significant feature. When Grohmann first surveyed the garden, when it was filled with rubble from renovations on the house, she was struck by their beauty, so she had them repointed, recessing the sand-coloured mortar so each block stands slightly proud. "Because of the long hours of summer daylight in Scotland, garden lighting isn't essential, but here I've used uplighters to bring out the beauty of the walls," she says. She resisted the urge to smother them in climbers, preferring to use them as a decorative foil for well-spaced trees and shrubs.



What does stand against one wall is a handsome shed. "We could have gone for something contemporary but the owner specified a man cave, so I designed a traditional shed made from Scottish larch and cedar shingles and specified it should be extra-high, because he is very tall."

Getting to this point has not been without its headaches. The only access to the garden was along a narrow lane, with borders that had been beautifully planted and tended by surrounding householders. It took several attempts, but Grohmann did finally manage to manoeuvre a mini digger on to the site.

The result is a garden that balances contemporary design with traditional elements, and looks good in every season and all weathers. And it's all the better for its wonky footprint ■ [secretgardensdesign.co.uk](http://secretgardensdesign.co.uk)

**Clockwise from main: a bird's-eye view of the garden; a palette of perennials; Mexican fleabane, *Persicaria affinis* 'Superba', *Stipa tenuissima* and *Geranium* 'Rozanne'; uplighting on the walls**