



Catherine Clancy

99% pure New Zealand – small but beautifully formed. This dull shady London back garden has been transformed into a haven for its New Zealand owners

KIWI LIVING



ABOUT CATHERINE CLANCY

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Catherine was previously an IT manager and moved into Garden Design nine years ago. She studied design at the English Gardening School and the RHS DIP Hort at Hadlow College. Since then she has created award winning gardens and featured on BBC TV. Catherine creates each garden individually, in response to the client needs and the characteristics of the garden, using an appropriate intelligent design. All her gardens tend to have a strong organic structure and an abundance of planting to suit the site conditions. Wherever possible, gardens are made sustainable, using local materials, encouraging wildlife and vegetable growing.

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This garden was like many other London gardens: small, overlooked, and exposed to noisy traffic on the surrounding streets. It was further compromised by a difficult north facing aspect and poor soil. The challenge for me was to turn it into a family friendly garden which had a degree of privacy, and was bright, open and contemporary. In addition, the owners, originally from New Zealand, wanted a bit of their New Zealand homeland in their back garden, along with a vegetable patch.

In answer to this brief, I decided to create a modern urban space using chunky wooden sleepers for raised beds, smooth decking and grey limestone paving, and to plant almost all New Zealand natives, with just the exception of the vegetables, an apple tree and herbs such as thyme, sage, rosemary and bay.

One of the first tasks was to repair the crumbling soil retaining wall along the back boundary of the garden, so that the trellis screening could be secured to it. The trellis, made from horizontal treated softwood batons, adds height to the wall and provides the much needed privacy without blocking out light.

I designed the garden with three levels, in order to break up the space and to create visual interest. The lowest level provides a cosy, secluded sunken corner paved with soft grey-blue limestone. This serves as a dining and entertaining space with power, lights and a BBQ space. The grey-blue limestone paving was also used to pave the area around the house. Two 3m by 3m decking platforms made of southern pine, provide wide, child-friendly steps down to the sunken corner. Subtle spike spot lights enhance the rest of the garden for evening use. →



Designing the garden at a 45 degree angle to the house also made it seem much bigger. Planting beds made from sleepers run along the garden walls; these beds vary in height from two sleepers to four sleepers, and also double up as seats. The clients did not want to clutter the garden with tables and chairs, so an additional small bench was built against the back wall.

To increase the sense of enclosure and privacy, I planted abundantly with large specimens of New Zealand native plants. Many of these plants are dramatic, architectural specimens to complement the contemporary uncluttered theme. The colour palate of the planting was limited to mostly greens and silver; with a few purple/yellow shrubs for contrast. Dramatic specimens include the large tree fern *Dicksonia Antarctica*, and the phormiums. Shade-loving ferns grow happily in the north-facing garden. A special soil mix of composted bark and topsoil was created for the fern beds, to ensure that they would thrive, and a leaky hose irrigation system was installed to provide enough water in the dry London environment. Two Kiwi fruit vines, strawberries, some vegetables and herbs were planted in the raised bed nearest the seating area, which is the sunniest bit of the garden.

The plants used in this garden are all weather hardy for London, although the cyatheas (the smaller tree ferns) need fleece

protection in a particularly cold, wet, windy winter. Shrubs such as *astelia*, *coprosma*, *lophomyrtus* and *pseudopanax* are known to be frost tender, which means that they may need protection in areas of the country that are prone to heavy frost pockets. Some of the other shrubs, such as *Libertia ixioides*, and *phormiums* will survive very cold winters provided the soil is free draining. *Pittosporum* will survive a few degrees below zero, as long as they have had a good summer to ripen the wood.

1 Planting detail.

2-4 Sketchup design plans.

5 The garden before work took place.

6 One corner of the garden showcasing the decking and the raised planters containing shrubs and *cyathea smithii*.



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Project details

Size of project:
50m² L shaped garden

Project Duration:
February to June 2008

Cost: approx. £15,000

Aspect and soil:
north facing; London clay,
sand and imported soil

Boiler house

Paving

Fence 1640mm

Sleeper raise
bed 240mm

Sunken paved
seating area



PLANTING LIST

Trees

- Apple 'Queen Cox'

Shrubs

- Astelia 'Silver Mound'
- Astelia chathamica
- Coprosma 'Karo Red'
- Corkia x virgata 'Red Wonder'
- Corkia x virgata 'Sunsplash'
- Laurus nobilis 3L 60/80cm
- Leptospermum scop. 'Burgundy Queen'
- Libertia ixioides

- Libertia peregrinans 'Gold Leaf'
- Lophomyrtus 'Red Dragon'
- Myosotidium hortensia
- Phormium cookianum 'Cream Delight'
- Phormium tenax
- Pittosporum tobira
- Prostanthera cuneata
- Pseudopanax lessonii 'Cyril Watson'
- Rosmarinus officinalis
- Salvia officinalis
- Thymus vulgaris
- Uncinia uncinata 'Rubra'

Ferns

- Adiantum eadiantum
- Asplenium polidum
- Blechnum fluviatile
- Cyathea delbata
- Cyathea smithii
- Dixonia antarctica
- Hypolepsis ambigua
- Pellaea falcata
- Pneumopteris
- Polystichum richardii
- Pteris tremula
- Todea barbara



REFERENCES

Designer
Catherine Clancy
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Contractor
S&S Landscapes

Southern pine decking, planed tanalised softwood sleepers, softwood trellis materials
S&J Wacketts Timber Merchants
 5 Shelbourne Road,
 London N17 0JX
Tel: 020 8801 9090
Email: info@sjwackett.co.uk
Web: www.sjwackett.co.uk

Paving materials, Kotah blue limestone
Rock Unique
 Dryhill Lane,
 Sundridge,
 Sevenoaks,
 Kent TN14 6ED
Tel: 01959 565 608
Email: stone@rock-unique.com
Web: www.rock-unique.com

Ferns
Bowdens
 Cleave House,
 Sticklepath
 Okehampton,
 Devon EX20 2NL
Tel: 01837 840 989
Web: www.bowdenhostas.com/pages/Fern-Care/

Specialist compost, soil, fruit trees and selected shrubs
Provender Nurseries
 The Landscape Centre,
 Leydenhatch Lane,
 Swanley
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Tel: 01322 662 315
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DESIGN PLAN

