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Transformed!

OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING SPACE

Andrew Bainbridge and Paul Chard decided to enlist the help of a garden designer to make the most of their outdoor space

WORDS **AMY WRIGHT** PHOTOGRAPHS **EARTH DESIGNS** WWW.EARTHDESIGNS.CO.UK

THE PROBLEM

'When we moved into the house it had just been renovated by a developer, so all the work had been done for us and we were happy. The back garden, however, was another story; it had been cleared and left. It was totally empty with just the remains of an Anderson shelter from the war at the bottom.'

WHAT WE DID

'Because we didn't need to spend any money on the inside of the house, we were happy to spend on the garden. We both agreed that we should get



BEFORE

Apart from a 1940s air-raid shelter, the couple's garden was a blank canvas



FACT FILE

THE OWNERS

Andrew Bainbridge (left), a teacher, and Paul Chard, a bank manager

THE PROPERTY

A three-bedroom terraced house

THE LOCATION

North London

WHAT THEY SPENT

£7,000, which included the design, labour and all materials, and the planting

The transformation includes high tree ferns, a low concealed shed and a secluded seating area – perfect for entertaining





Above and below
A decked pathway runs the garden's length, skirting a small calming water feature

help from a professional garden design company, as although we had some ideas, we knew we wouldn't be able to do all the work ourselves.

'I contacted three companies via adverts in a local paper and asked for some quotes for the work. Initially, we were just thinking of a new patio area with plants. But one of the designers, Katrina from Earth Designs, helped us realise we could achieve much more.

'She listened and basically told us politely that we could do much better than a basic patio and lawn. Her enthusiasm won us over. After the initial meeting, she left a selection of books for us to look through and we picked out anything that we liked the look of.

'When we met up with Katrina again, we talked through our new ideas. What

'We wanted to step out into our garden and feel like we were on holiday, not in London'

we had come to realise was that we wanted to step out into the garden and feel like we were on holiday, not like we were still in London.

'Katrina then came up with a design including a stretch of decking running from the house to the end of the garden, where there would be an enclosed seating area. This immediately appealed, as did the small water feature – this was an idea that we hadn't even considered before.

'Katrina gave us three different options at three different prices: £5,000, £7,000 and £9,000. Initially, we had set aside £3,000-4,000 but, after seeing the plans and what could be achieved, we decided it would be worth spending more and settled on the £7,000 budget. This was to include everything from labour and materials to all the plants and the water feature.

'We moved into the house in November and wanted the garden looking good for the following summer, so work began in February. It took about a month for everything to be completed and there was a fair amount

of disruption. The only access to the garden is through the house, so tools, breeze blocks, earth etc. all had to be carried through. The team did lay plastic down and we were able to leave them with our keys and let them get on with it. Luckily, for the time of year, the weather was good – but everyone worked late nights to get it finished.

'The fence both sides of the garden was new when we moved in but had been painted bright orange, so we chose a more subtle blue. Matching panels were used to hide a new shed, with a few pots put on top. We look out and don't even see it's there, but it's so useful for our bikes and the barbecue.

'We're very pleased with the whole project. We added some plants but it's basically the same. Repainting the walls white and keeping the lawn tidy are the only maintenance jobs. The tall tree ferns and bamboo round the seating area really make the space feel private, and with outdoor lighting we can be out there well into the night. I'm so glad we got the help of a garden designer, it was definitely money well spent.' 

