



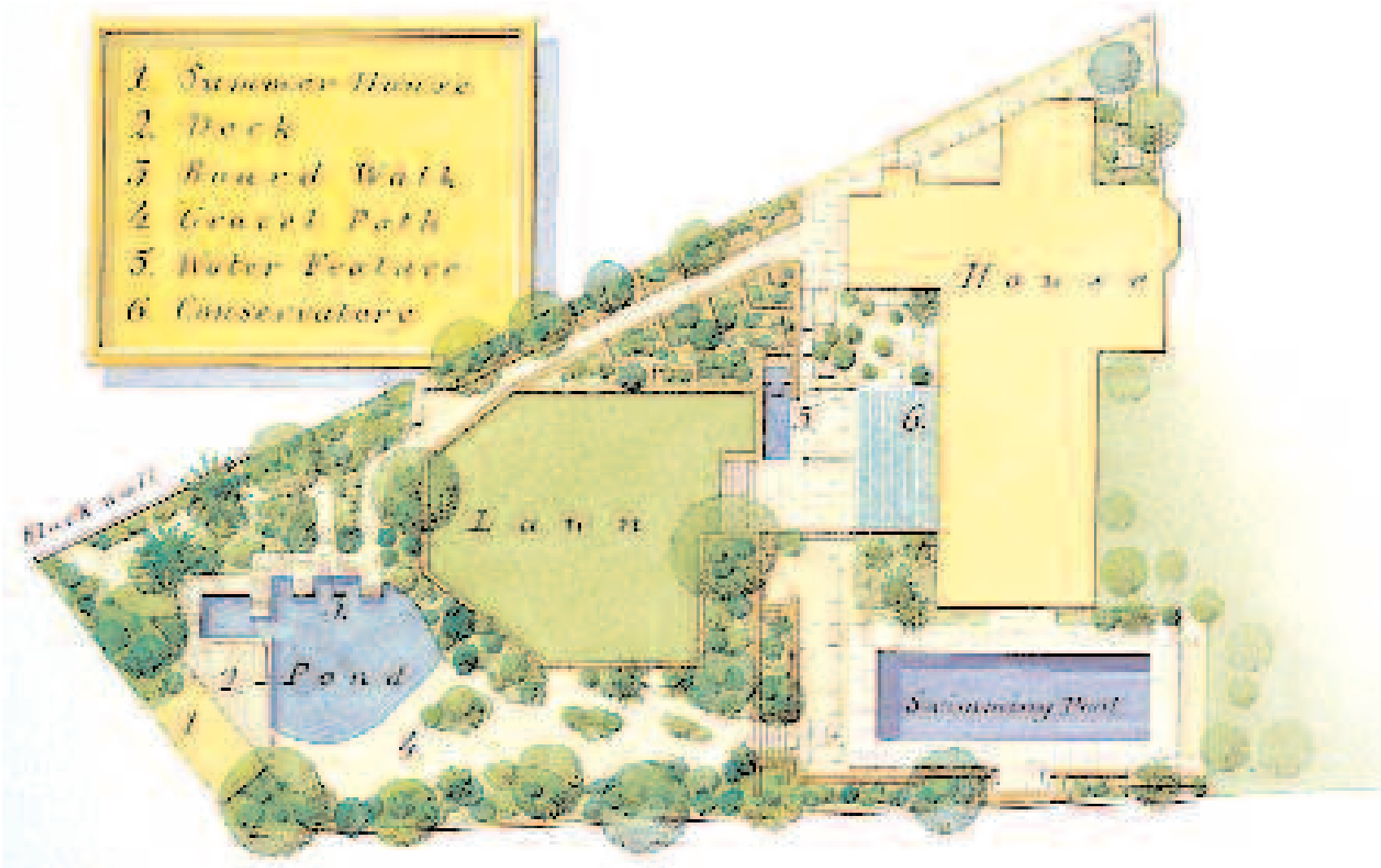
DESIGN GUIDE

A SUBURBAN JUNGLE

A major two-year project designed to link a re-designed Surrey house with its garden resulted in this polished design by landscape architect Sam Martin. The scheme uses water, specimen trees, a wooden boardwalk and lush jungle planting to transform a once conventional back garden into a well-used contemporary outdoor space.

PHOTOGRAPHS JERRY HARPUR WORDS ANNE DE VERTEUIL





GARDEN PROFILE

GARDEN SIZE approx 810 sq m
(2,196 sq ft)

ASPECT North-west

STYLE Contemporary, architectural
natural

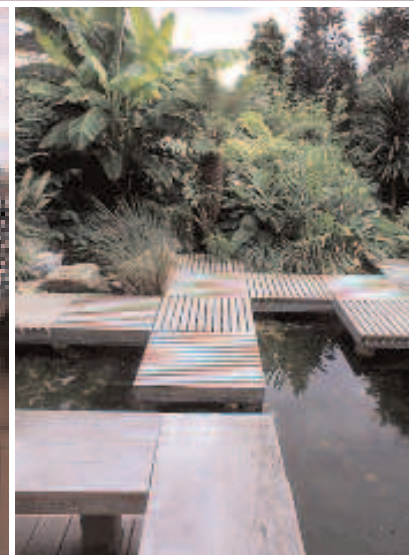
Garden designers spend much of their time working around the existing features of a garden - anything from trees and existing paving to well-loved sheds - so the opportunity to start with a blank canvas is both rare and challenging. When the new owners of this Surrey garden acquired their detached house with secluded back garden, they immediately saw the potential for something far more interesting than the conventional lawn and shrubbery that was then in place. They decided on a clean sweep - house and garden would both be opened up and a more fluid connection made between them.

It was at this early planning stage that they contacted New Zealand landscape architect Sam Martin and commissioned him to design a new garden for them. Over a two year period, Sam worked closely with the owners and their architect to make a garden that seemed to flow from the house and unite the indoor and outdoor spaces. The overall look was to be clean and uncluttered, with strong lines and a degree of contemporary formality, and the brief included a natural body of water, against which a new summerhouse would be set, and some substantial, 'jungle' planting.

GARDEN ELEMENTS

AT THE OUTSET, IT WAS AGREED THAT none of the existing shrubs were worth keeping and the poor condition of the solitary tree, an oak, meant there was no option but to remove it. But the garden had the great asset of being sheltered by mature trees from neighbouring gardens, a fact which granted privacy and gave the new design a sense of scale and an established backdrop. Then the almost triangular shape of the garden required some ingenious thinking. The skewed angles of the back and east-side boundaries create an awkward apex that lines up directly with the back of the house, while the back fence, lying on a diagonal to the house, seems to leap forward, and has the effect of severely foreshortening the garden. Sam's designs tend to develop out of a strong basic structure, the result he says of his training as a landscape architect. His solution was to mask the apex with trees, an Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior* 'Jaspidea') and an Antarctic Beech (*Nothofagus antarctica*) and to almost fill the narrower end of the garden with the pond. A hardwood deck on a network of galvanized steel supports was designed as a staggered boardwalk along one side of the water, and the pronounced grid-like pattern makes a striking feature that helps, quite literally to square the garden off. The siting of the glass-fronted summerhouse across the water and against the angled boundary completes this part of the garden and gives it a satisfying architectural presence, which is amplified and softened by the surrounding planting.

A HEATED SWIMMING POOL (*right*) is tucked into the space to one side of the house, and from here, steps lead up to garden level with reclaimed timber sleepers forming raised beds for low-growing and prostrate shrubs.



THE GLASS FRONT OF THE CONSERVATORY (*top*) opens up to its full width and the floor is continuous allowing a seamless transition between inside and out. The paving, sourced by the owner, is a Portuguese limestone.

THE BOARD WALK (*above*) makes an effective transition between the water and the jungle planting. ▶

DESIGN DETAILS



THE WATER FEATURE (*left*) Facing the conservatory at house level, a small cascade feeds down from the timber sleeper beds to a narrow channel in the paving.

THE STEPS (*below*) are made from Portuguese limestone and connect the swimming pool with a broad planted gravel walk that leads to the summer house. Each step is made of three stacked slabs and echoes the lines of the sleeper beds on either side.



DRAMATIC PLANTING (*above*) , Around the summerhouse, the huge leaves of *Darmera peltata* supply drama in summer, grouped with *Hedychium 'Tara'* and *Zantedeschia aethiopica*.

THE PAVING (*right*) with its crisp edging, extends the lines of the house into the garden. The materials have been chosen for their ability to reflect light. The nearly-white limestone and a warm-toned Chinese bauxite gravel stand out in strong relief against the stained timber and the dark, leafy backdrop.



THE ARCHITECT DESIGNED SUMMERHOUSE is positioned on the far side of the water to give a sense of seclusion and adventure. It was designed by David Long Associates (tel: +44 (0)20 7837 3293).

THE FOCUS OF THE PLANTING is on shape and form, with splashes of colour among the upright shape of the grasses.

A SIMPLE BUILT-IN TIMBER SEAT is integral to the structure of the deck and helps to square things off by emphasising the right angle

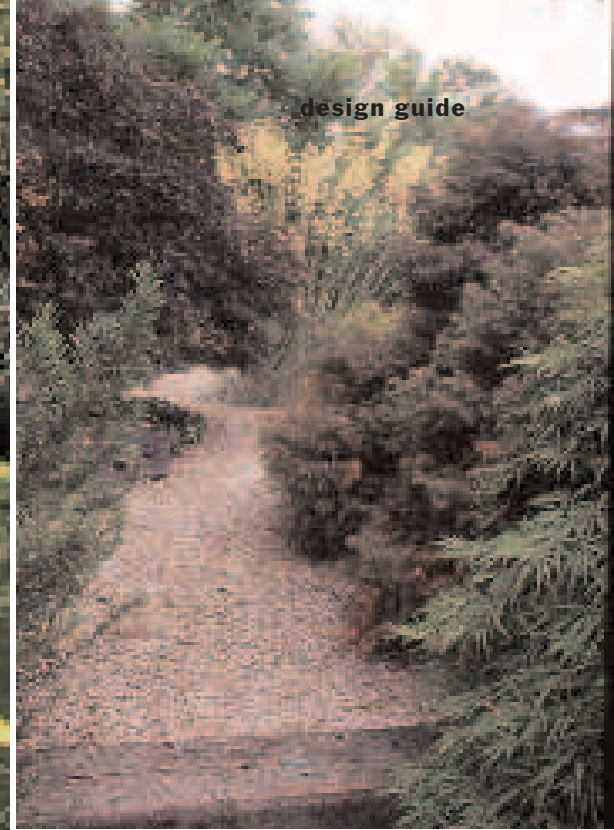
THE BOARDWALK is made of ipe, a durable hardwood, ethically sourced. The series of platforms (inspired by the work of Dutch landscape architect, Mien Ruys) are fixed to a galvanised steel frame that is supported by timber posts in the pond.

SUMMER HOUSE AREA





BOARDWALK FOLIAGE
EFFECTS from bananas
(*Musa bajoo*), tree ferns
(*Dicksonia antarctica*)
and grasses (*Cortaderia x
richardii*).



THE PLANTING

DESPITE APPEARANCES, THE GARDEN'S DIMENSIONS are relatively small. Yet a sense of spaciousness has been achieved, mainly by the use of broad sweeps of light coloured stone and shingle, combined with reflective water and the green carpet of lawn in the centre.

The tendency in small spaces is to plant thinly or tentatively, but Sam implemented a bold planting scheme - one that doesn't dabble, but uses a number of trees, many planted as mature or semi-

mature specimens. These include acers, both the small, broad-growing *A. palmatum* cultivars and the taller *A. griseum* and *A. rubrum* 'Scanlon', along with alders (*Alnus glutinosa* 'Imperialis'), Antarctic beech (*Nothofagus antarctica*), *Amelanchier lamarckii* and stag's horn sumach (*Rhus typhina*). This has given the garden, now approaching its third year, a well-established look with layered planting of different heights, backed up by the taller storey of trees in the neighbouring gardens.

The back of the house faces due north, so areas closest to the house are in shade or semi-shade. Here, in summer, the acers, with ferns and grasses supply foliage shape and texture in a range of greens and dark reds. In the hotter spots at the far end of the garden, the enormous leaves of banana (*Musa basjoo*) soar up with colour from gingers, (*Hedychium*) and dahlias. Lushness around the pond is supplied by the large glossy leaves of clumps of arum lily (*Zantedeschia aethiopica*).

COOL PINK (above) *Allium aflatuense* supplies early summer colour amongst shrubs on the east side of the garden.

THE BROAD GRAVEL PATH (above right) is lit up by a stand of *Stipa gigantea* beside the pond. On the right, *Acer palmatum* 'Viridis' and *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans'; on the left, rosemary with, in the distance *Acer palmatum* 'Nigrum'.

DESIGNER PROFILE



SAM MARTIN TRAINED AS A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT in his native New Zealand and now runs his own practice based in Battersea, London. His passion and knowledge of plants and the landscape came from growing up on a family farm, with an 'English' garden, surrounded by native forest in Canterbury, New Zealand. Since returning to England in 2001 he has built up an impressive portfolio of large scale private gardens, London gardens, roof & courtyard gardens throughout the UK. Recently he has redesigned the New Zealand Plant Collection at the Savill Garden at Windsor. Sam's work can be viewed at www.exteriorarchitecture.com and he can be contacted at: smla@exteriorarchitecture.com

BOARDWALK TIMBER

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LANDSCAPERS

- **Clifton Nurseries**

www.clifton.co.uk

PLANT SUPPLIERS

- **Tendercare (trees)**

www.tendercare.co.uk

- **Architectural Plants**

www.architecturalplants.com

- **The Palm Centre**

www.thepalmcentre.co.uk