

GARDEN DESIGN

# BEST *in* SHOW

We present winning ideas from the SGD's Garden Design Awards, including a child-friendly space, a roof-top retreat and a water garden with a view

INTERVIEWS ZIA ALLAWAY



*"I have set bands of red roses against a sea of cooling greens so that the radiant scarlet stripes stand out like strokes from a giant paintbrush."*

## COLOURFUL FRONT DRIVE

WINNER OF THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD,  
sponsored by *Homes & Gardens*



GARDEN DESIGN  
**Fiona Stephenson**  
MSGD, 07976 723164,  
fionastephensondesigns.com.

Fiona Stephenson's entry was one of the shortlisted designs in the International Garden Award category. The large country garden was chosen by *H&G* readers and (thanks to social media) by the wider international public, as their favourite of all 17 of the gardens that were shortlisted in the main 2017 Awards.

### KEY PLANTS

*Aster* x *frikartii* 'Mönch'  
*Bergenia* 'Bressingham Ruby' (elephant's ears)  
*Buxus sempervirens* (common box)  
*Echinops ritro* (globe flower)  
*Fatsia japonica* (Japanese aralia)  
*Fraxinus excelsior* (ash tree)  
*Iris germanica* 'Blue Boy' (bearded iris)  
*Iris germanica* 'Hollywood Nights' (bearded iris)  
*Iris germanica* 'Kharput' (bearded iris)  
*Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote' (English lavender)  
*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Flamingo'  
*Miscanthus sinensis* var. *condensatus* 'Cosmopolitan'  
*Rosa* 'La Seviliana'  
*Rosa* 'Pacific Dream' (syn. 'Blue for You')  
*Rosa* 'Vesuvia'  
*Rosmarinus officinalis* Prostratus Group (trailing rosemary)  
*Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ear)  
*Tilia x europaea* (linden tree)  
*Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese wisteria)

**What did these parts of the garden originally look like?** Both spaces are part of a larger landscape that surrounds my home, a stone-built maison de maître in a small medieval village in the south-west of France. The drive (above) was covered with huge brambles and abandoned vehicles when we first saw it. Now, it separates the front and back gardens, and the path (above left) leads from the drive, along the front of the house to the front door.

**Tell us about your design inspiration** I was partly inspired by the classic topiary and the rose garden at the Manoir d'Eyrignac to create a design for these two areas that is typically French, with plants that spill onto the path while climbers festoon the house to create a relaxed look.

**How have you linked the gardens with the house and landscape?** The views were one of the reasons why we fell in love with this property so I have planted a low foreground, to enhance them, and

used a semi-formal style to complement the house, its history and setting. The box hedging, lavender, irises and rosemary are typical of gardens in this area, to which I have added an unusual blue rose (*Rosa* 'Pacific Dream') and the crimson rose 'Vesuvia'. A few trees, including a *Tilia x europaea* (linden tree), offer shade and structure and echo those in the surrounding countryside.

**What is the ideal design for front gardens used to park cars?** Replace the grass with a frame of soft plants, such as grasses and *Stachys byzantina* (lamb's ears), to offset the parking areas, which should be porous to prevent flooding. A small spreading tree, such as an ash, makes an elegant, shady focal point and to inject a little sparkle, add a bit of colour, as I have done with red roses.

**How do you use bold colours without them looking gaudy?** Be brave and use bold colours in swathes or ribbons; dotting one plant here and there can make the scheme look spotty and disjointed.

*“I chose the leaf-shaped seats to match the fluid lines of the planters, paths and deck. The seats are also low enough that you can look at the planting behind them as you walk by.”*



## WATER GARDEN WITH A VIEW

JOINT WINNER OF THE MEDIUM RESIDENTIAL GARDEN AWARD, sponsored by Capital Garden Products, and WINNER OF THE HARDSCAPE AWARD, sponsored by Hardscape

**WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**  
**“This is an inspiring project. Different, challenging and innovative, it demonstrates a huge amount of thought and attention to detail. The design is bold and ambitious, and has been immaculately constructed.”**  
**“The beautiful curved retaining walls and hard detailing all demonstrate the greatest degree of difficulty, with each element perfectly executed.”**

### KEY PLANTS

*Acaena microphylla*  
 ‘Kupferteppich’ (syn. ‘Copper Carpet’) (New Zealand burr)  
*Allium hollandicum* ‘Purple Sensation’  
*Bupleurum falcatum*  
 (sickle-leaved hare’s ear)  
*Crataegus crus-galli* (cockspur thorn)  
*Erigeron karvinskianus* (Mexican fleabane)  
*Hebe* species

*Iris* × *robusta* ‘Gerald Darby’ (water iris)  
*Kniphofia* ‘Nancy’s Red’ (red hot poker)  
*Lonicera nitida* (shrubby honeysuckle hedge)  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides*  
 ‘Cassian’s Choice’ (fountain grass)  
*Pennisetum alopecuroides*  
 ‘Hameln’ (fountain grass)  
*Santolina chamaecyparissus* (cotton lavender)  
*Sarcococca confusa* (sweet box)



GARDEN DESIGN  
**Ian Kitson FSGD**,  
 07742 301799, [iankitson.com](http://iankitson.com).  
 Planting by Julie Toll,  
 01438 310095, [julietoll.co.uk](http://julietoll.co.uk).

**Has there always been a garden here?** Yes; the site is a Grade II-listed historic garden and the owner asked me and Julie Toll, with whom I often work, to reinvigorate the design. This particular spot overlooks the River Conwy estuary. It was an overgrown, mid-20th-century rock and gravel garden on a small, levelled terrace cut out of the steep slopes that rise up from the river to the house.

**Tell us about your inspirations for the design** The layout is based on the mesmerising sand patterns that are revealed in the estuary’s waterbed at low tide. The Corten steel planters, wooden decks and stone walkway all mirror these formations and are set on the garden’s original east-to-west axis. The deck is designed to be the main stopping point, from where the views of the estuary and the planted slopes are most spectacular.

**How did you choose the hardscape materials?** I needed flexible materials for the fluid shapes. Corten steel was the logical choice for

the pond planters as it can be moulded into any design and its rusted surface will not deteriorate any further when it is left in water. The path was built on a stone block base, which is topped with sawn sandstone, as were the retaining walls. I also built several large Corten steel planters into the stone walls at various points, and I love the way their terracotta red edges look like streams of lava flowing down the hillside, into the water.

**What measures do you use to keep the water clean and clear?** A combination of the right planting and gravel beds filters the water and keeps it clean. The water is pumped beneath the path before it is pushed through a foot-deep bed of gravel, which traps any debris and sediment between the grains. Microbes (beneficial bacteria) then break down this debris, leaving the water clear and free of chemicals. The water is more than three feet deep, which means that the sun cannot penetrate to the bottom, which prevents the growth of algae.

“Choose robust plants that children can interact with, such as bamboos or tall miscanthus grass, for making dens. Create a jungle-themed garden with hardy Chusan palms, japonicas and tree ferns, and grow edible plants to fire their imaginations.”



## CHILD-FRIENDLY PLAY GARDEN

WINNER OF THE PUBLIC OR COMMERCIAL OUTDOOR SPACE AWARD, sponsored by Vande Moortel, and WINNER OF THE GRAND AWARD, sponsored by CED Stone Group



GARDEN DESIGN  
Robert Myers MSGD,  
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robertmyers-associates.co.uk.

**WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**  
‘A really exciting, generous and inspirational project that stood out in the category. Ambitious, innovative and cohesive, the design handles an intimidating setting extremely well, with good references to its history.’  
‘Full of surprises, and great fun, this is a truly magical garden.’

### KEY PLANTS

*Akebia quinata* (chocolate vine)  
*Asplenium scolopendrium* (hart's tongue fern)  
*Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* (Himalayan birch)  
*Blechnum spicant* (hard fern)  
*Dicksonia antarctica* (tree fern)  
*Fatsia japonica* (Japanese aralia)  
*Laurus nobilis* (bay tree clipped into lollipops)  
*Liriope muscari* 'Big Blue' (lilyturf)

*Miscanthus sinensis* 'Emmanuel Lepage' (silver grass)  
*Panicum virgatum* 'Warrior' (switch grass)  
*Rhus typhina* (stag's horn sumach)  
*Rosa* 'Madame Alfred Carrière'  
*Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chusan palm)  
*Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese wisteria)

**What was the brief for this garden at Hampton Court Palace?**  
Historic Royal Palaces wanted an imaginative garden built on the site of what was once Henry VIII's tiltyard; the design had to reflect the 600-year history of the palace and grounds, and be somewhere for people with children to visit and play.

**How would you describe your design for the Magic Garden?**  
A winding path takes you on a journey through interconnecting, themed gardens. A giant pergola walkway (above left) that is huge at one end and shrinks in size as you walk along it, creating an *Alice in Wonderland*-like play on perspective, leads to the Mythical Beasts' Lair (above). Here lives a fire-breathing dragon, with a lair that is a raised woven willow nest crafted by sculptor Tom Hare, into which children (and adults) can climb. There is also a circular lawn at the Tournament Ground, surrounded by historically themed, turreted towers, giant topiary, a wild wood, a spiral-shaped mount, a moat and a grotto, with robust planting to fuse it all together.

**How have you introduced the history of the palace into the garden?**  
The turreted towers reference the Tudor tiltyard towers, and throughout the garden we have included statues of heraldic beasts, such as lions and panthers, and mythical creatures, including unicorns, dragons, and the 'yale' (which has the body of a goat and the tusked head of a boar), all of which appear in the architecture of the palace in various forms.

**What design tips do you have for play gardens?**  
We deliberately decided not to use any of the usual play equipment in the Magic Garden, and have instead made areas where children are encouraged to use their imaginations and create their own worlds. You can use elements of the design in your own garden, such as densely planted trees and shrubs in which children can hide and make dens, large boulders that they can climb over, and a sloping area to roll down. We used artificial grass for the mounds and slopes, which works really well and needs almost no maintenance.

PHOTOGRAPHS: ALEX RAMSAY

*“To shield roof gardens from neighbouring windows, use planters of different heights to grow drought-tolerant dwarf pine trees and hornbeam or laurel hedging.”*



## STYLISH ROOF-TOP RETREAT

WINNER OF THE ROOF GARDEN AWARD,  
sponsored by Gavin Jones



GARDEN DESIGN  
**Emily Erlam,**  
07973 419097,  
[erlamstudio.com](http://erlamstudio.com).

PORTRAIT RACHEL WARNE

**WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**  
**‘A fascinating and well laid-out garden with a smart but textured feel. Well finished and full of character, the garden’s planting, the containers and fixed furnishings have been carefully considered to cope effectively with the roof-top situation, while a clever incorporation of water creates a wonderful sense of peace and calm.’**

**What was the owners’ brief for this garden?** This roof garden is on the top floor of a new building in London’s King’s Cross, and the owners wanted an oasis that also embraces the wonderful views. They asked for places in which to relax and entertain and wanted me to disguise the edges with planting, as one of the owners has a fear of heights. The main sitting room opens directly onto the roof terrace and I worked with the interior architects, Johnson Naylor, to create a smooth transition between the inside and outside spaces.

**How did you transform the area into a garden?** For a private roof garden in London, this space is very large and I felt that it needed to be separated into smaller, more intimate areas, to create a sense



### KEY PLANTS

<i>Calamintha nepeta</i> (lesser catmint)	(mock privet)
<i>Ceanothus</i> 'Blue Mound' (Californian lilac)	<i>Pinus mugo</i> (dwarf mountain pine)
<i>Erigeron karvinskianus</i> (Mexican fleabane)	<i>Pinus sylvestris</i> 'Watereri' (Walter pine)
<i>Hebe rakaiensis</i>	<i>Pittosporum tenuifolium</i>
<i>Carpinus betulus</i> (hornbeam)	<i>Pittosporum tobira</i> 'Nanum' (Japanese mock orange)
<i>Lavandula</i> × <i>intermedia</i> 'Grappenhall' (lavender)	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> Prostratus Group (trailing rosemary)
<i>Pennisetum alopecuroides</i> 'Hameln' (fountain grass)	<i>Prunus lusitanica</i> (laurel)
<i>Phillyrea angustifolia</i>	<i>Santolina chamaecyparissus</i>
	<i>Stachys byzantina</i> 'Silver Carpet' (lamb's ears)

of seclusion and security. Breaking it up with planting also provided shade and shelter from the sun in summer, and from the winds, which can be surprisingly strong. I also wanted to give the owners a reason to go outside, and not just look at the garden from inside, so I have created destination points, and worked in seating and dining areas between the planters. The whole terrace is edged with planters filled with shrubs, perennials and grasses, which form a low, leafy barrier that still allows views over the city. A contemporary water feature provides a focal point, relaxing sound and movement, which in turn, distracts you from any street noise below.

**Tell us about your planting choices.** I love the hummocky look of Mediterranean-style shrubs and trees such as lavenders, hebes, santolina, pittosporum, phillyrea (mock privet) and pines, and these tough plants are also perfect for a roof terrace, where they will withstand intense sunlight and harsh winds. I have also added softer flowering plants, including gaura, the little daisy *Erigeron karvinskianus*, irises and small narcissi to inject some seasonal interest. Grasses and trailing rosemary add texture and help to soften the edges of the planters.

**What tips do you have for planting a roof terrace?** Weight restrictions are the primary concern, so choose lightweight planters and specialist growing media, and plants with shallow roots. We also installed an irrigation system to keep the plants healthy.

## THE SOCIETY OF GARDEN DESIGN AWARDS 2017

### The winners, the awards and their sponsors

#### INTERNATIONAL AWARD

**Sponsor** Landform  
**Winner** James Basson MSGD

#### BEST PUBLIC OR COMMERCIAL OUTDOOR SPACE

**Sponsor** Vande Moortel  
**Winner** Robert Myers MSGD

#### BEST LARGE RESIDENTIAL GARDEN

**Sponsor** Gabriel Ash  
**Winner** Acres Wild (registered practice)

#### BEST MEDIUM RESIDENTIAL GARDEN

**Sponsor** Capital Garden Products  
**Joint winners** Matt Keightley MSGD, Ian Kitson FSGD

#### BEST SMALL RESIDENTIAL GARDEN

**Sponsor** Stonemarket  
**Winner** Helen Elks-Smith MSGD

#### BEST GARDEN JEWEL

**Sponsor** Brett Landscaping  
**Winners** Jane Brockbank MSGD, Sue Townsend MSGD

#### BEST ROOF GARDEN

**Sponsor** Gavin Jones  
**Winner** Emily Erlam

#### BEST BIG IDEAS, SMALL BUDGET

**Sponsor** Country Supplies  
**Winner** Anne Windsor

#### BEST HEALING OR LEARNING GARDEN

**Sponsor** Easigrass  
**Winner** Ann-Marie Powell MSGD

#### BEST PLANTING DESIGN

**Sponsor** Barcham Trees  
**Winner** Matt Keightley MSGD

#### BEST HARDSCAPE

**Sponsor** Hardscape  
**Winner** Ian Kitson MSGD

#### BEST HISTORICAL GARDEN RESTORATION

**Sponsor** Deepdale Trees  
**Winner** Christian Sweet MSGD

#### BEST PAPER LANDSCAPES

**Sponsor** Green-tech,  
**Winner** Carolyn Willitts

#### BEST STUDENT DESIGN (COMMERCIAL)

**Sponsor** British Sugar, Topsoil  
**Winner** Nicky Burr ridge

#### BEST STUDENT DESIGN (DOMESTIC)

**Sponsor** London Stone  
**Winner** Sheila Jack (for two projects)

#### THE LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Sponsor** Alitex  
**Winner** Fernando Caruncho

#### THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARD

**Sponsor** *Homes & Gardens*  
**Winner** Fiona Stephenson MSGD

#### THE JUDGES' AWARD

**Sponsor** Harrod Horticultural  
**Winner** Matt Keightley MSGD

#### THE GRAND AWARD

**Sponsor** CED Stone Group  
**Winner** Robert Myers MSGD

### THE 2017 JUDGING PANELS

#### MAIN AWARDS PANEL

**ANNIE GUILFOYLE**, garden designer and lecturer  
**ARABELLA ST JOHN PARKER**, houses and gardens editor, *Homes & Gardens*  
**DEBORAH TRENTHAM**, garden historian and lecturer  
**JULIE TOLL FSGD**, garden designer  
**RICHARD SNEESBY**, landscape architect, garden designer, author and lecturer  
**SARAH EBERLE FSGD**, landscape architect and garden designer

#### STUDENT AWARDS PANEL

**ANDY STURGEON FSGD**, garden designer  
**ARABELLA ST JOHN PARKER**, houses and gardens editor, *Homes & Gardens*  
**DEBBIE ROBERTS MSGD**, garden designer

