



JAMES SCOTT MSGD

Before James Scott MSGD started working on his new garden in 2016, he took a brief from his family – wife Helen and two daughters, then aged nine and 12. The 30 x 20m west-facing garden of their Bedfordshire new build was a blank canvas. “I went through the same process that I would with a client. I didn’t want a space that just indulged my wishes, or a showpiece garden. I wanted something that was right for all of us – hopefully for a long time.”

The family wanted a generous dining area, a good-sized lawn, a place to grow vegetables and a hammock to relax in. Room to entertain lots of people was a must, as were spaces for quiet retreat. The eldest daughter suggested a fire pit, while the youngest wanted a trampoline.

The house already had a connection to the garden thanks to the bi-fold doors, and Scott wanted to build on that. “I also wanted a warm, organic feel. It’s a modern house and the garden needed to align with that, but not in a clinical way.”

The right lines

The pale grey sandstone terrace flows from the kitchen, while the planters, low walls and laser-cut art of the fire pit are all weathering steel that rusts to warm tones. The clay pavers leading to the fire pit complement the Edwardian brick wall, while the fire pit seating and raised beds in the veg garden are green oak.

After a toss-up between an organic or recto-linear design, he plumped for the latter: “I wanted simple

TOP A sandstone terrace gives onto a lawn with beds of alliums and nepeta **BELOW** Scott is able to use the garden to try out different planting combinations



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TOP Beyond the Corten-edged beds with multi-stemmed amelanchiers is a small meadow, hammock and a hidden trampoline **ABOVE** The fire pit

geometry to set off the layered planting.” The terrace is home to four large ‘floating’ planters, while the lawn has four generous quadrant beds. Both look like mass planting as the year progresses. To the side of the greenhouse is a meadow from Wildflower Turf, embellished with spring bulbs and home to the aforementioned hammock. The semi-sunken trampoline is screened by large miscanthus.

Personal planting

Scott indulged in a few favourite planting combinations and packed in 10,000 bulbs. “I’ve learned that if you plant 250 fritillarias, you’re lucky if 10 come through.” The planting is more complex than for a client – it’s more intricately layered, and allows him to experiment with different species and combinations. Spring sees splashes of orange and yellow, while muted blues and purples follow in summer.

Each terrace bed is home to a multi-stemmed amelanchier, underplanted with spring bulbs. The repeat planting includes *Euphorbia polychroma*, *Geum* ‘Totally Tangerine’, irises and grasses. The naturalistic lawn beds include alliums, nepetas, salvias, *Verbena bonariensis*, asters, achilleas and grasses. The perimeter borders are more of a woodland mix, including *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’, *Geranium nodosum*, polystichums and deschampsia.

“The garden really works and we use it a lot,” he says. “I keep in touch with the gardens I’ve designed, and my company often maintains them, but I don’t get the opportunity to closely study them on a daily basis as I can with my own garden. It helps me to design gardens that have longevity and enduring beauty.”

