





to create a central focus for the family to enjoy. Simplicity is key here and this tranquil and minimalist area displays a number of Anthony's trademark features, including a pair of giant circular Urbis containers brimming with water and planted with exquisite waterlilies, and a further three containers with *Carex comans* 'Bronze Form' spilling out. The top-quality Balau hardwood decking has weathered to a beautiful silvery-grey and unifies the space, making it possible for garden and house to be brought to the same level without excavation. This decked courtyard, with its earth-coloured chairs and loungers, is a perfect sun-trap and a great space for entertaining.

Along one side of the decking, an unobtrusive stone water rill is set against the weather-boarded converted stables that make up part of the house. A simple plank bridge crosses the rill, which is set within a pebbled surround and framed with a regimental row of *Equisetum hyemale* (rough horsetail). A clever recycled water system enables water to trickle gently from a minimalist stainless-steel pipe into the rill.

The garden owner employed local garden designer Rae Wilkinson to produce a planting scheme that would help to blend the garden with the wider landscape beyond to retain a naturalistic feel. Rae trained with Anthony and worked in his practice for 10 years, so she has understandably been influenced by his work. "I love his style," she says.

She selected a soft tapestry of perennials and grasses to withstand the heavy clay soil, which can



be bone-dry in the summer yet waterlogged in the winter months.

"It was all about framing the view," Rae explains. "Making the correct plant choices was crucial. I wanted to create a robust palette using low-maintenance plants that would suit the soil and also the style of the garden." She prepared the ground prior to planting by digging in a black mulch soil improver. "It's essential to turn over the clay as deeply as possible to at least fork depth before adding the soil improver," she advises.

The prairie-style planting uses drifts of colour and texture to achieve a dreamy fluidity that blends the garden with the tree-studded meadows beyond. Feather reed grass, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', softens a wall beside which is planted drifts of bright yellow *Rudbeckia*

Top left The recycled water rill is filled by a stainless steel pipe.

Above Rae's soft planting of grasses and perennials blends the garden with the meadows beyond.

Right White waterlily *Nymphaea alba*.

Below right Cheerful *Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'.





Fact file

- **Garden design** Anthony Paul
Landscape Design. Tel: 01306 627677;
anthonypaullandscapedesign.com
- **Landscape** Outdoor Options.
Tel: 01483 415602; outdooroptions.co.uk
- **Rill and pool stone** CED Stone.
Tel: 01708 867237; cedstone.co.uk
- **Water bowls and planters** Urbis.
Tel: 01759 373839; urbisdesign.co.uk
- **Aquatic plants** Anglo Aquatics.
Tel: 020 8363 8548; angloaquatic.co.uk
- **Sun loungers and furniture** Kettler.
Tel: 01527 591901; angloaquatic.co.uk
- **Planting** Rae Wilkinson Design Ltd.
Tel: 01403 782250; raewilkinson.com
- **Other plant suppliers** Orchard
Dene Nurseries. Tel: 01491 575075;
orcharddene.co.uk



fulgida var. *sullivantii* ‘Goldsturm’, and pink *Echinacea purpurea*. The Chinese fountain grass, *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Hameln’ has delicately tactile, purple-tinged, brush-like flowers that sit well alongside the lavender-purple *Aster x frikartii* ‘Mönch’, completing the painterly palette.

Having designed the softer planting, Rae now advises the owners on garden care and maintenance. “Other than a little weeding, the perennials don’t require much,” she explains. “We chose varieties that don’t need to be staked or supported and we tend not to cut them back until early spring.”

The grasses and perennials peak in early autumn and are left in winter to provide food for the birds. “The grasses and seedheads look spectacular with a dusting of frost,” observes Rae, who has added blue spires of *Camassia leichtlinii* subsp. *suksdorfii* among the perennials to give early spring colour. “The camassias are robust and ideal for this type of border because they die down completely before the ‘green phase’ begins in early summer,” she says.

The garden suffers few pests. “Deer are often a problem in rural gardens but they don’t seem to bother here,” notes Rae. It seems they are perfectly

Left Regimented rows of rough horsetail grow alongside the rill, which is crossed by way of a simple plank bridge.

happy to graze in the distant meadows, leaving this tranquil year-round garden to be enjoyed by the owners.

Design details

MAKING AN ENTRANCE

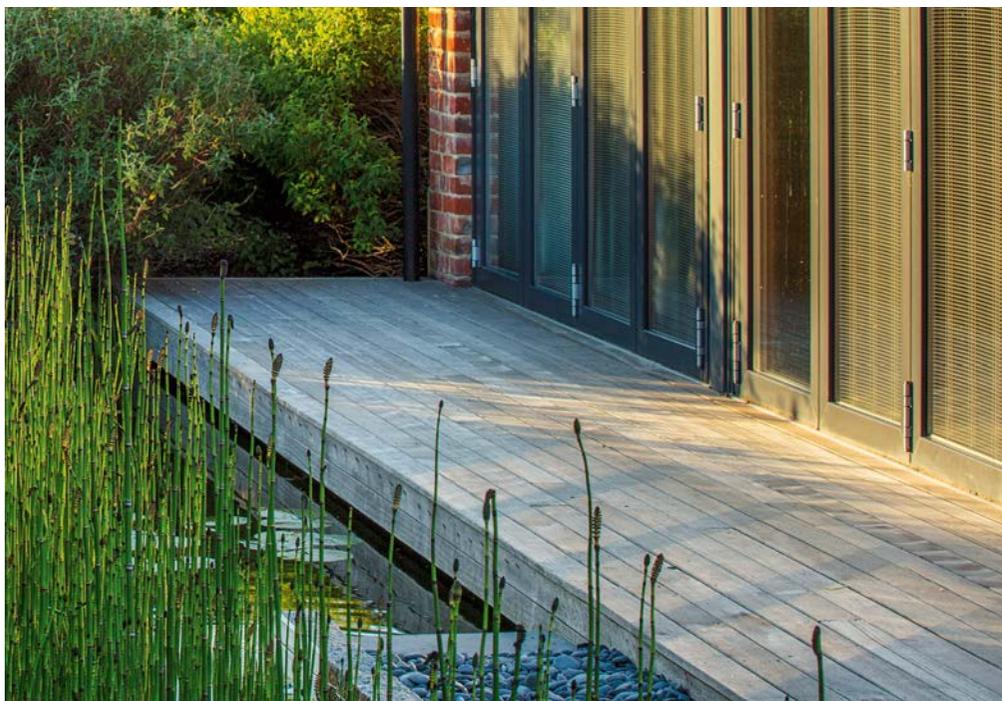
The garden is entered by way of a heavy wooden gate, and a tunnel of hedging has been planted to create an interesting journey from gate to garden. The evergreens used in the tunnel have been chosen for year-round interest: *Taxus baccata* (yew) on one side and *Laurus nobilis* (bay laurel) on the other. The tunnel adds a sense of theatre, much like walking from the wings to the stage.

THE RILL

The recycled-water rill is the main feature in this garden. The rill was built to Anthony Paul's original design by landscaping contractors Outdoor Options. The rill flows into a wider rectangular pool planted with waterlilies. According to the owners: "The waterlilies have established well and they pretty much look after themselves." In the courtyard, the horsetail beside the rill has to be properly contained to prevent it spreading, so pond liner is used in this section. Rae also recommends cutting the horsetail down to ground level in early spring to keep it under control. "It comes back brilliantly," she declares.

PLANTERS AND WATER BOWLS

These adaptable chunky pieces from Urbis are made from glass-reinforced concrete and come in a wide range of finishes. They are useful not only for planting – further waterlilies feature in two large circular Urbis bowls – but also look good simply filled with water, providing visual reflection and water for wildlife. "Still water works well in the bowls if you plant them up effectively," Rae affirms. She recommends growing a non-invasive oxygenating weed in aquatic soil at the base of the bowls and then adding annual floating aquatic



plants. "Rainwater is usually enough to keep the bowls topped up, although you can always use a hosepipe to keep them filled to the brim," the owners explain.

DECKING

It is important to ensure that the hardwood selected is sustainably sourced, and Balau decking is by far superior to other hardwood choices. The decking can 'green up' a little and may get slippery when icy; jet-washing it once a year removes the buildup and keeps the boards looking their best. The decking lends itself to a space that's perfect for entertaining, while the furniture in muted tones complements the timber to give an organic and natural feel.

PRAIRIE PLANTING

An established-looking garden can be created using a greater number of plants for immediate impact. For the drifts of grasses and perennials grown here, Rae used 30-50 individual plants in each block. The heavy clay soil needed a lot of digging and mulching prior to planting, but by improving the soil the composted layer gets worked in. The garden owner particularly wanted to have low-maintenance plants and the varieties Rae has chosen need little care once they are established, requiring cutting back just once a year. ■



Top The top-quality, sustainable Balau decking has weathered to a beautiful shade of silvery-grey, helping to create a natural look.

Above The horsetail is contained by pond liner to stop it from spreading, and the rill flows into a rectangular pond.

Left Glass-reinforced concrete Urbis pots are planted with waterlilies.

