

The Irish Garden

SUMMER 2025 | www.garden.ie

Climbing
plants for
colour and
scent

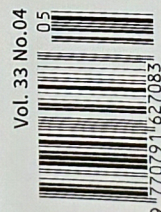
Full swing summer

Celebrating
Irish-bred
roses

What to
do in your
garden in June

Essential
hardy
geraniums

€6.50 £4.95
INCLUDING ALL TAXES



COURTYARD HAVEN

THE BRIEF

On my initial visit to this garden, it presented as a typical, urban garden, characterised by its simplicity, low-maintenance design which included artificial turf, and a straightforward layout. The existing garden was relatively small and not used by the family. The kitchen had recently undergone modernisation and there was a noticeable disconnect between the indoor space and the garden.

With the children now grown, the owners expressed a desire to transform the garden into a more sophisticated and impressive space. They envisioned a layered and refined courtyard garden that could serve as an additional room for adults to relax, entertain family and friends, and enjoy when viewed from the kitchen. Given that the entire back wall of the house is glass, the garden is constantly visible from the kitchen and dining areas. Consequently, it was essential for the garden to maintain an impressive appearance throughout the year, not just during the summer. In addition, privacy was a crucial consideration due to the overlooking neighbouring houses. The resulting garden now effectively serves the family's needs and seamlessly integrates with the home.

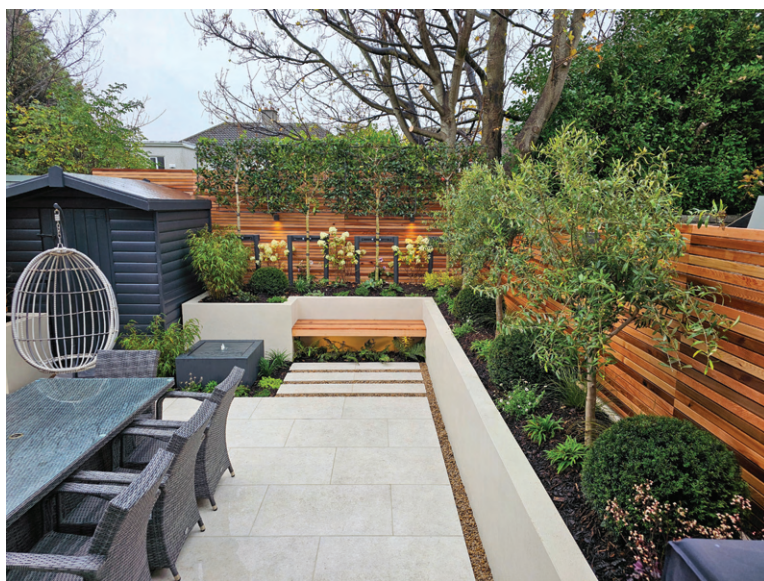
DESIGN CONCEPT

The design concept for this garden focuses on creating a serene and versatile outdoor retreat that blends functionality with elegance. Designed to be an inviting haven, the space serves as an extension of the home, perfect for relaxation, entertaining, or simply appreciating nature from the comfort of indoors. The large floor-to-ceiling glass sliders of the kitchen extension create a visual connection, making the courtyard feel like a natural continuation of the living space.

With a compact footprint, the garden needed to balance both aesthetic appeal and practical usability. The considered selection of hard and soft landscaping materials plays a vital role in achieving this. Every element, from the porcelain tiling and warm cedar detailing to the raised beds, was chosen to complement both the architectural style of the home and the ambience of the space.



View of the garden before development



View of the garden from the house post construction

Privacy was a significant consideration, given the proximity of neighbouring houses. Pleached trees offer height and seclusion without overwhelming the garden, while the structured layout ensures functionality. Subtle lighting adds an enchanting dimension, illuminating textures and casting shadows to create a tranquil, yet sophisticated atmosphere, as day turns to night. This space exemplifies how careful design can transform a garden into a private retreat and an integral part of the home.

ISSUES

Because the house is terraced, materials had to be moved manually through the house and access to the back garden with a mini-digger was impossible. This required dismantling and building the garden by hand. As the family was living in the house, each morning, it was necessary

Fact File

Project: Rear garden of a suburban house
 Designer's Name: Dean Lacey, MGLDA
 Constructed by: LandArt (owned by Dean Lacey)
 Location: Terenure, Dublin
 Area: 50 m²



Cedar slatted screening and pleached hollies provide the backdrop for the raised bed planting, floating bench and water table

to cover the hall and kitchen floors, protect door frames and ensure the walls were not damaged when moving materials in and out of the garden. The absence of a digger and the requirement to move materials through the house resulted in a longer time for building the new garden.

THE DESIGN

Hard Landscaping

The hard landscaping significantly transformed the ambience of this garden. We replaced the old artificial grass, worn paving and concrete edging with a softer and more contemporary palette. The large, porcelain tiles are pale and neutral, requiring minimal maintenance, while also reflecting light to enhance the openness of the space. These tiles beautifully complement the dark timber and warm cedar elements.

Raised beds, framed in a soft off-white, provide structure and serve as additional seating. Towards the rear, a floating cedar bench, one of the standout features, is strategically positioned to draw the eye and serve as a focal point. This bench enjoys the morning sunlight, fulfilling an essential requirement for our client. Adjacent to it, we incorporated a small water table within a surrounding of low vegetation, introducing movement and a soothing soundscape.

The existing shed was painted in a deep greyish black (RAL 7021), and cedar slatted screening was

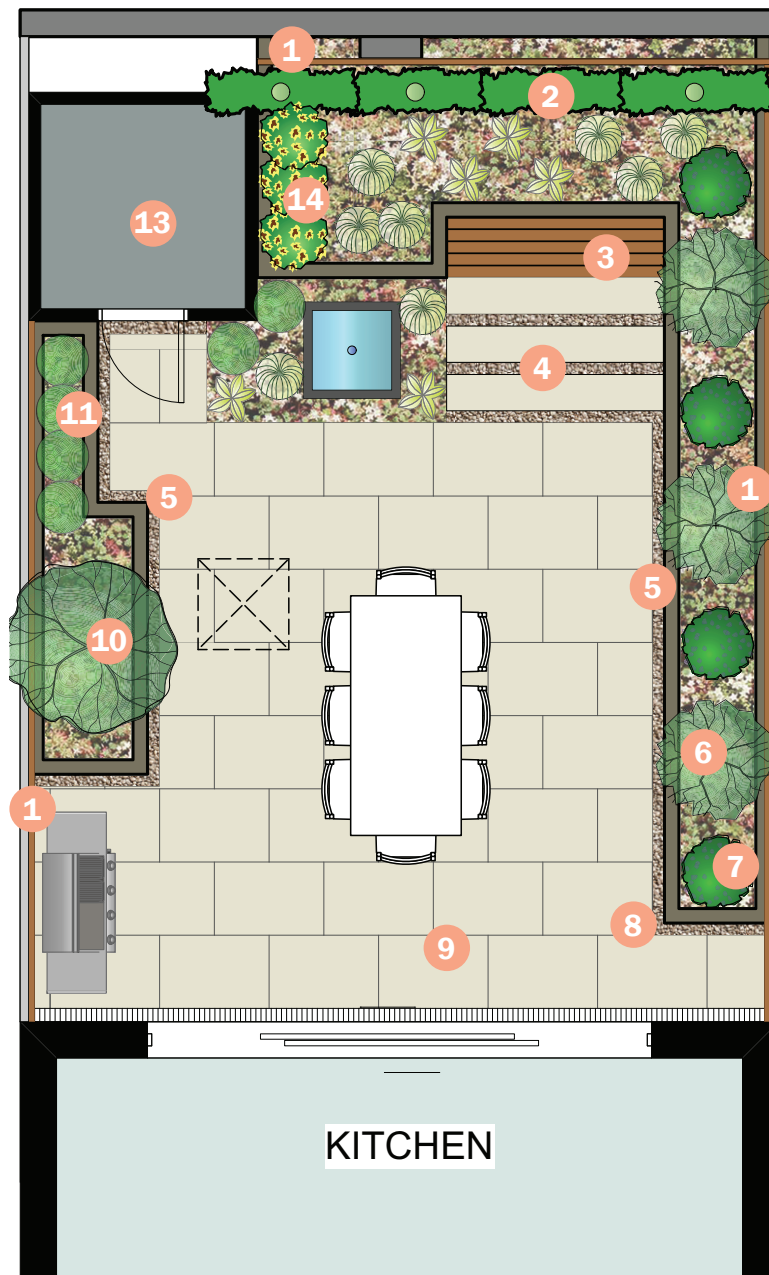
installed to conceal the old fence panels, adding warmth and texture. This also supports pleached trees and allows for the incorporation of subtle lighting. At night, the lighting under the bench and along the fence creates a warm, glowing effect, making the garden feel truly exceptional.

Despite its compact size, the carefully considered layout combined with attention to detailing and finishes have turned the garden into an extra room, extending the home, both by day and night.

Soft Landscaping

The planting focused on introducing softness, texture, animation and seasonal change into what was previously a very minimalist space. The approach involved integrating a combination of structural evergreens and softer, seasonal plants to ensure year-round visual appeal. Along the rear boundary, pleached, half-standard holly trees were planted to provide height and privacy, without imparting a heavy feel. Beneath these trees, *Hydrangea paniculata* 'Limelight' was added. To soften the sides of the shed, *Fargesia* bamboo was strategically positioned. Additionally, yew (*Taxus baccata*) domes were repeated alternately with olive trees along the raised bed to impart structure and rhythm.

A notable feature is a multi-stem *Camellia sasanqua* tree, styled in a parachute form, serving as a focal point, with its evergreen foliage and late-season blooms. Short-stemmed olive trees



1 Cedar horizontal slatted screening fitted with down lights at regular intervals

2 Pleached half-standard hollies

3 Cedar floating bench

4 Porcelain stepping stones with pebble dividers

5 Raised planter

6 Olive tree x 3

7 Taxus baccata (yew) domes x 4

8 Pebble borders around paving to aid drainage

9 900mm x 600mm, ivory cream porcelain tiles

10 Feature multi-stemmed tree, Camellia sasanqua

11 Tall ornamental grasses

12 Water table with built-in pump and light

13 Shed painted dark grey to blend into background

14 Fargesia bamboo to camouflage shed wall



Downlighting subtly illuminates the raised bed with domes of yew and olive trees repeated alternately

were incorporated to contrast effectively with the dark leaves of the pleached holly and yew, as well as complementing the pale tones of the paving. To soften the edges of plantings at the rear of the patio, groundcover plants were selected to spill over in a slightly informal manner. The selection included sedum, liriope, tiarella, erigeron and dwarf agapanthus. Evergreen *Dryopteris* ferns were planted under the floating bench. In the raised beds, some ornamental grasses, such as *Carex testacea* and *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Flamingo', were used. The colour palette of the remaining planting is primarily greens, whites and blues.

In the evening, subtle lighting accentuates the textures of the plants and casts gentle shadows, transforming the ambience of the garden. Though compact in size, the thoughtful planting design elevates it into a private green space that remains inviting throughout the year. ●

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