

# HOMES & GARDENS<sup>®</sup>

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# DESIGNER SECRETS

*Sara Jane Rothwell explains how she created this calm urban space in which to unwind, entertain and exercise*

**THE BRIEF** "Although my clients gave me an open brief for the design, they wanted a garden that would provide them with a relaxing space which could also accommodate a cedar lodge housing a gym."

**DESIGNER'S SOLUTION** "My clients were a Dutch couple with teenage children who had recently acquired this property in North London. My first thoughts were to include a patio to catch the evening sun and to create more privacy, as the whole space was overlooked by neighbours. I also had to rethink the design of a deck next to the house, which was surrounded by an unattractive balustrade. Added to this, the garden sloped across its width.

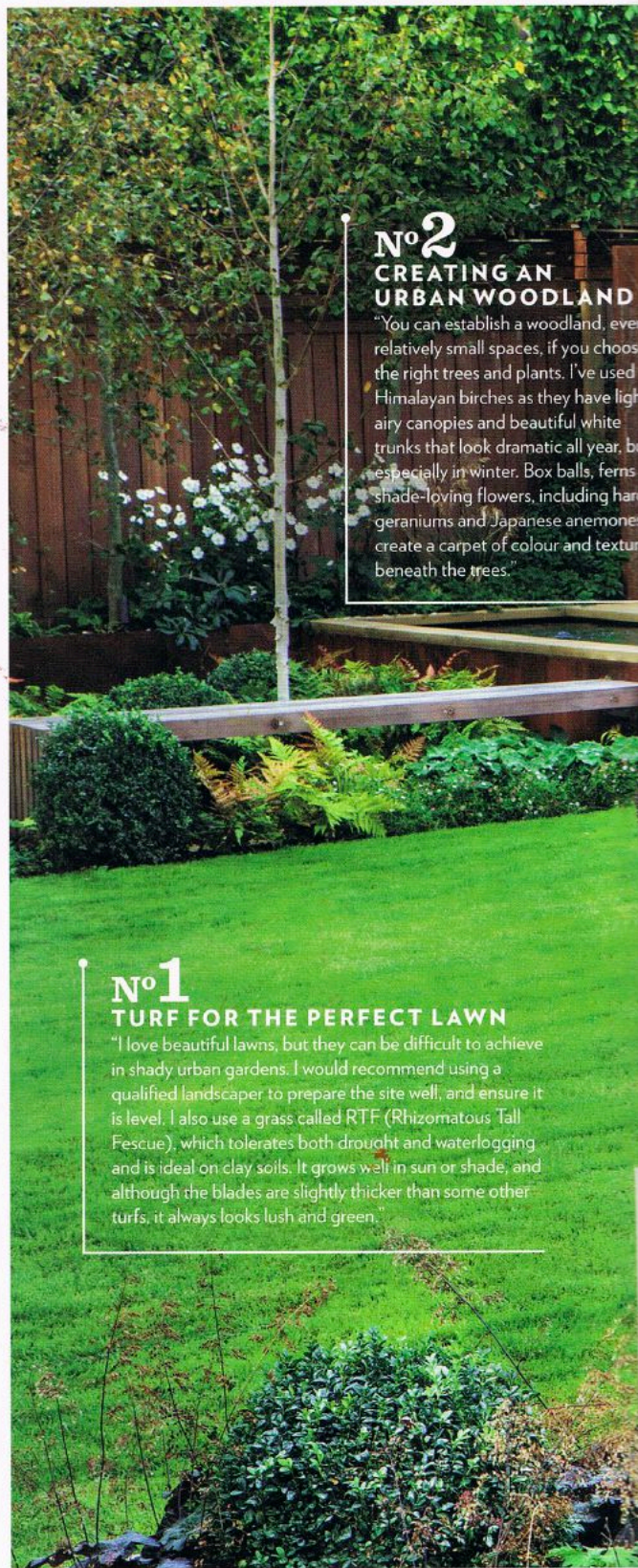
"First, I installed a beautiful balau fence around the garden, with a pleached hornbeam hedge to provide more height and to mask the surrounding properties. I designed the patio and water feature to mirror the lines of the house and installed the steps to create a smooth transition up the slope. I love the way Corten steel develops a rusty patina, so I decided to use this in a series of panels as subtle decoration for the back of the patio. At the foot of the garden, a birch grove is underplanted with ferns and flowers, while raised beds, which replace the balustrading around the deck next to the house, are filled with seasonal planting, which adds splashes of pink, maroon and purple to the predominantly green and white colour palette."



## DESIGNER PROFILE

Having spent 11 years travelling the world as a theatre and film set designer, Sara Jane Rothwell retrained in horticulture and garden design at Capel Manor College. She set up her design practice in 2003, specialising in contemporary urban gardens that demonstrate her eye for 3D design and theatrical effects. Sara Jane's business has gone from strength to strength, and her award-winning designs have brought her international recognition.

INTERVIEW ZIA ALLAWAY | MAIN PHOTOGRAPH MARIANNE MAJERUS



## Nº2 CREATING AN URBAN WOODLAND

"You can establish a woodland, even in relatively small spaces, if you choose the right trees and plants. I've used Himalayan birches as they have light airy canopies and beautiful white trunks that look dramatic all year, but especially in winter. Box balls, ferns and shade-loving flowers, including hard geraniums and Japanese anemones create a carpet of colour and texture beneath the trees."

## Nº1 TURF FOR THE PERFECT LAWN

"I love beautiful lawns, but they can be difficult to achieve in shady urban gardens. I would recommend using a qualified landscaper to prepare the site well, and ensure it is level. I also use a grass called RTF (Rhizomatous Tall Fescue), which tolerates both drought and waterlogging and is ideal on clay soils. It grows well in sun or shade, and although the blades are slightly thicker than some other turfs, it always looks lush and green."

## Nº3 POSITIONING PATIOS

“Although a dining area close to the house is practical, if the garden faces north, like this one, and it is shaded for part of the day, I often include another seating area to catch the sun at other times. Here, the seating is west-facing so a large umbrella offers shade when needed, and a gas-fuelled fire pit provides warmth and light after dark.”

### FACT FILE

#### KEY PLANTS

- *Anemone x hybrida* ‘Honorine Jobert’ (white Japanese anemone).
- *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* (Himalayan birch).
- *Buxus sempervirens*.
- *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam).
- *Dryopteris erythrosora* (copper shield fern).
- *Erysimum* ‘Bowles’s Mauve’ (perennial wallflower).
- *Euphorbia amygdaloides* var. *robbiae*.
- *Geranium himalayense* ‘Gravetye’.
- *G. macrorrhizum*.
- *G. phaeum* ‘Album’.
- *Heuchera* ‘Palace Purple’.
- *Hydrangea arborescens* ‘Annabelle’.
- *Iris* ‘Superstition’.
- *Salvia sylvestris* ‘Caradonna’.
- *Tellima grandiflora*.
- *Verbena bonariensis*.

#### WHERE TO BUY

**Barcham Trees**, 01353 720950, [barcham.co.uk](http://barcham.co.uk).

**Burncoose Nurseries**, 01209 860316, [burncoose.co.uk](http://burncoose.co.uk).

**Crocus**, 0844 557 2233, [crocus.co.uk](http://crocus.co.uk).

**Lindum Turf**, 01904 448675, [turf.co.uk](http://turf.co.uk).

**Readyhedge**, 01386 750585, [readyhedge ltd.com](http://readyhedge ltd.com).

#### LANDSCAPE MATERIALS

The patio is sawn Yorkstone, and the fencing is made from balau hardwood. The Corten steel panels and facing for the water feature were supplied by Glen Metals, and installed by Belderbos Landscapes. The water feature was specified by Fairwater. The furniture is from the Cloud range by Gloster.

#### WHERE TO BUY

**Belderbos Landscapes**, 020 8940 2832, [belderbos.co.uk](http://belderbos.co.uk).  
**CED**, 01708 867237, [ced.ltd.uk](http://ced.ltd.uk).

**Fairwater**, 01903 892228, [fairwater.co.uk](http://fairwater.co.uk).

**Glen Metals**, 01236 424396, [glenmetals.com](http://glenmetals.com).

**Gloster Furniture**, 01454 631950, [gloster.com](http://gloster.com).

#### CONTACT DETAILS

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