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# Garden news

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## GARDEN OF THE WEEK FACTFILE

**Gardener** Richard Zinzan  
**Address** 121 Freshfields Road, Brighton BN2 0BR  
**Been in the garden** 20 years  
**Size** 6m by 6m (20x20ft)  
**Soil** Chalky  
**Visited** August



# An outdoor room

A well-structured garden embraces small spaces to extend this seaside home



Melissa Mabbitt  
Garden writer

**A**RCHITECT Richard Zinzan has brought his knowledge of design and planning skills together in his small

Brighton garden. He has transformed it from a small patch of concrete and grass into an extension of his home, filled with sculptural elements.

It is heavily influenced by his work as a designer. "It's about space and form and colour and creating something quite interesting. Where things are placed, it's like placing furniture in a room – you want to make a comfortable place to be," he said.

"When we gained the garden we basically gained another room. The garden is a room to us, it makes the house feel bigger."

Richard has remodelled the 1920s semi-detached house to make the interior more live-able and this included making better use of the outdoor space. An underused dining room with French windows became a large living space with bifold doors opening out onto an area of deck that was previously 'dead' space.

The house also has an unusual first floor extension that provides a covered area for the deck below, making this area a cosy place to sit whatever the weather. The underside of the overhang has even been fitted with speakers and lights.

Wood cladding on the walls and wood-clad recessed seats blend seamlessly with the wooden deck. They are also an ingenious storage solution in this space-strapped garden – the seats lift up to reveal storage spaces within.

Steps down from the deck once protruded into the garden, but

Richard changed their layout so that they now hug the side of the deck and free up more space below. This clever re-jigging means that Richard and partner Chris can now make the most of the small green area.

Though a petite patch, the garden itself is packed with planting and feels verdant and secluded. The garden is neighboured by larger gardens that surround the garden with a border of green. Richard said: "They benefit our garden so it feels much bigger than it is – it's one of the tricks of the design."

Richard also raised his garden fences by installing 2m (6ft) high trellising that creates privacy. It's stained a dark colour and swathed in climbing plants such as roses and ivy. It increases the height of the planting so that when viewed from the house the planting merges with the surroundings.



The garden is seamlessly linked to the inside of the house

Decking and wooden furniture, plus big-leaved plants, give the plot a jungly feel



Zingy orange crocosmia makes a fiery accent



Succulents in pots add detail and contrasting foliage shapes

*Garden highlights*  
 Cleverly planted pots and bold colours keep this garden looking good



Clever levels have helped Richard get the most from the space

"It's trying to create an optical illusion," said Richard.

The green backdrop allows the architectural plants and features to stand out. Richard and Chris have chosen plants with striking foliage forms, such as *Fatsia japonica*, black bamboo, aeonium and echeveria. Ferns (including a tree fern) are planted in the shadiest spots in the garden. Though there is colour, especially from a swathe of orange crocosmia, raspberry pink

climbing roses and mauve geraniums, the garden is one of subtle greens, where architectural form is more important than strong colour.

Richard said: "Mainly we wanted the garden to be there all year round, for it to be evergreen and low maintenance, with a burst of colour in spring and summer. The plants are architectural and have lots of presence."

An old water tank is planted with an elegant arrangement of

rodgersia, *Geranium palmatum* and zantedeschia. The tank was taken from the loft and is one of the many reclaimed items in the garden. Another planter is made from an old wooden packing box that Richard clad with reclaimed roof slates. It sits on the edge of the top deck as a barrier and is planted with a different display each year.

The garden's also full of sculptural ornaments, including features

made by local artists, such as a wooden teardrop sculpture and two stone carvings. Richard said: "I like the abstract form – when it's abstract but feels natural. Natural materials work in a way I find quite appealing."

The overall effect is one of stylish design within a relaxed ambience – a small but perfectly formed garden that is part of Richard and Chris's home.

TURN OVER FOR MORE GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS ➤



**Gn** Recommends Architectural plants



**Eucomis bicolor**

A borderline hardy plant with exotic looks, the small star-like flowers are green with maroon edges and topped with a pineapple-like tuft of foliage. Best moved indoors in winter.



**Nicotiana glauca**

This tall tobacco flower can reach 1.5m (5ft). The long trumpet flowers give off a wonderful scent at dusk, when their white colouring also looks good. A half-hardy annual.



**Musa basjoo**

A hardy banana, which can be left in the ground in winter as long as the foliage is wrapped. The large, elegant leaves make a statuesque addition to the garden.



**Geranium 'Russell Pritchard'**

A trailing hardy geranium that makes an attractive dense mat of neat, lobed leaves topped by magenta pink flowers. A great groundcover plant.



**Echeveria 'Purple Pearl'**

This very attractive succulent has rosettes of rounded, fleshy grey leaves that take on rosy tints at the edges. Best moved indoors in winter, but can stay outdoors in mild areas.



**Salvia argentea**

A biennial or short-lived perennial plant with huge leaves covered with silver down. If allowed to flower the foliage deteriorates badly, so flower spikes should be cut off.

Steal Richard's style



A modern water feature from Habitat doubles up as garden sculpture



Architectural plants form striking foliage effects together in this reclaimed water tank



A carved stone sculpture catches the eye



This 'ceramic sack' planter was made by a local artist and is planted with a trailing succulent *Lampranthus spectabilis*



Spiky palm *trachycarpus* and palmate *Fatsia japonica* contrast well with strappy-leaved *crocosmia*



The smart wood-clad seating doubles up as a storage space - the tops hinge open



Richard has even squeezed salad leaves into his pots



The garden is filled with unusual planters and elegant objects

Where Richard buys his plants...

- Big Plant Nursery Limited, Hole Street, Ashington, West Sussex RH20 3DE  
tel: 01903 891466; [www.bigplantnursery.co.uk](http://www.bigplantnursery.co.uk)
- Architectural Plants, Nuthurst, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 6LH  
tel: 01403 891772; [www.architecturalplants.com](http://www.architecturalplants.com)