

Step in line

DESIGN: SARAH JANE ROTHWELL
PHOTOGRAPHY: MARIANNE MAJERUS

The brief for Sara Jane Rothwell was to create a family friendly garden on a steep slope, incorporating a lawn, extensive planting and several seating areas to enable enjoyment of the space from several angles

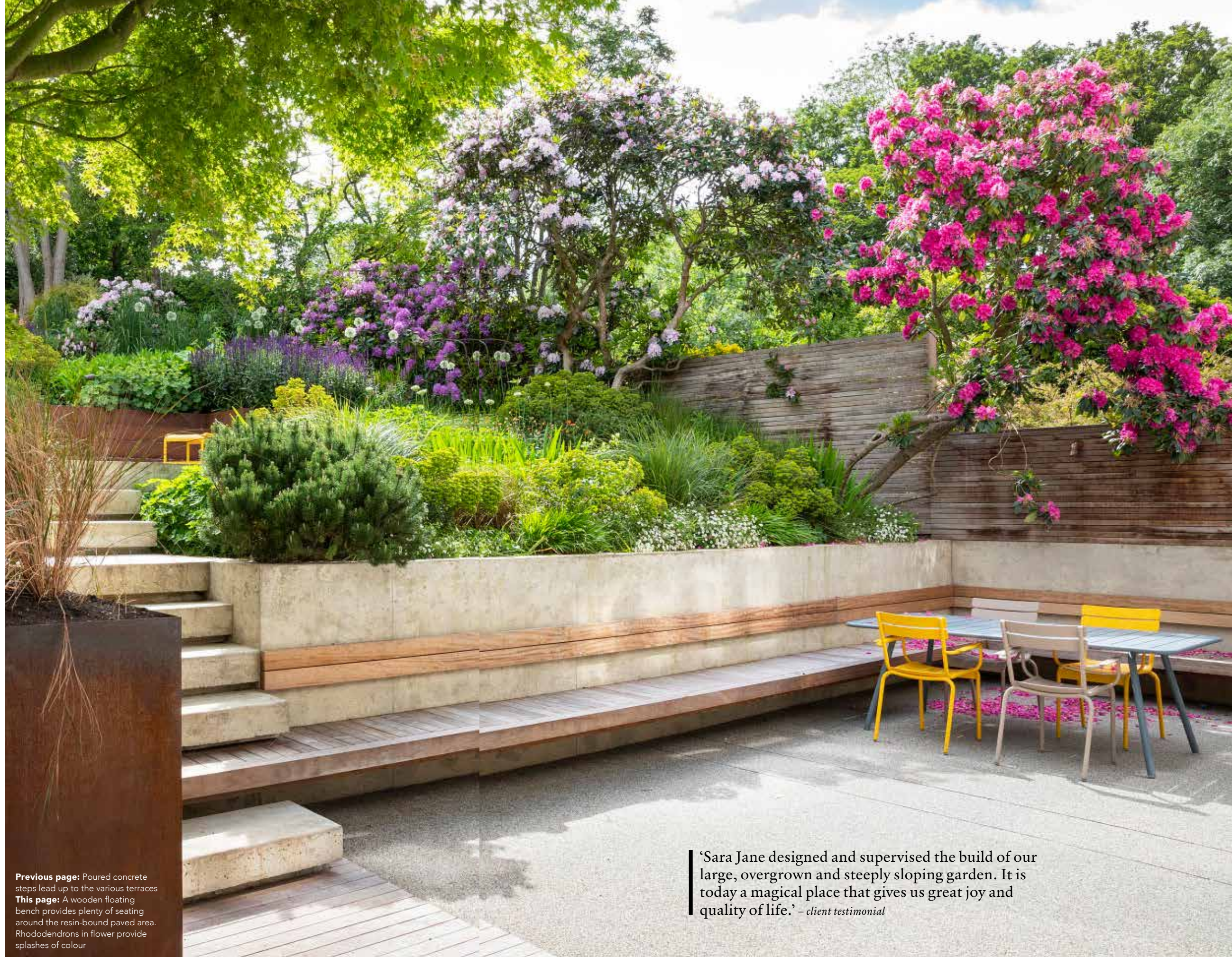


PROJECT DETAILS**Total value:** £150,000**Size of project:** 610m²**Build time:** 12 months**Designer:** Sara Jane Rothwell,
London Garden Designer,
*londongardendesigner.com***Contractor:**
Clinton Wootten Landscapes

The existing garden layout was very unwelcoming, with a lot of overgrown shrubs and dense foliage that resembled a long dark tunnel. The garden was laid mainly to lawn and sloped steeply upwards away from the house. The rear boundary and last 4-5m of the garden were overgrown and inaccessible. Dense borders with overgrown shrubs blocked the view out from the house, whilst not providing enough screening from the neighbours. The garden sloped 7m from the house patio to the rear fence, making the current lawn unusable. The clients really wanted the space to work more practically for them as a family, and to encourage the children to venture and explore outdoors.

Sara Jane Rothwell was asked to design and incorporate a discreet outdoor gym and studio within the scheme, and to create a flat lawn for the client and his son to kick a ball around. These elements were incorporated in the top third of the space, allowing plenty of remaining space to create a meandering journey, through layers of cascading plants, with places to stop and pause. Due to the steep slope the design and build involved some major excavation to allow a bigger patio space that was in balance with the house. The team worked with the existing levels around the fence lines, to minimise disruption, and created gently staggered steps and terracing through the central section.

The slope itself acts as a wonderful stage set to showcase the garden. The poured concrete retaining walls, hardwood timber and Corten steel all weather naturally, which combined with the soft, undulating



Previous page: Poured concrete steps lead up to the various terraces
This page: A wooden floating bench provides plenty of seating around the resin-bound paved area. Rhododendrons in flower provide splashes of colour

‘Sara Jane designed and supervised the build of our large, overgrown and steeply sloping garden. It is today a magical place that gives us great joy and quality of life.’ – *client testimonial*

rhythm and repetition of the planting, has resulted in a soothing and restful composition.

The clients are from Sweden and wanted to incorporate planting that reminded them of home. Also, the rear of the garden backed onto Highgate Bowl Conservation area, so it was important that the boundaries were merged, embracing the natural woodland beyond.

To start with, the dense, tangled undergrowth was cleared, to reveal the trees and shrubs that could remain and thrive within the new scheme. Any trees that were removed required conservation area consent. Approximately 20 new trees were brought in which were a variety of

MATERIALS USED

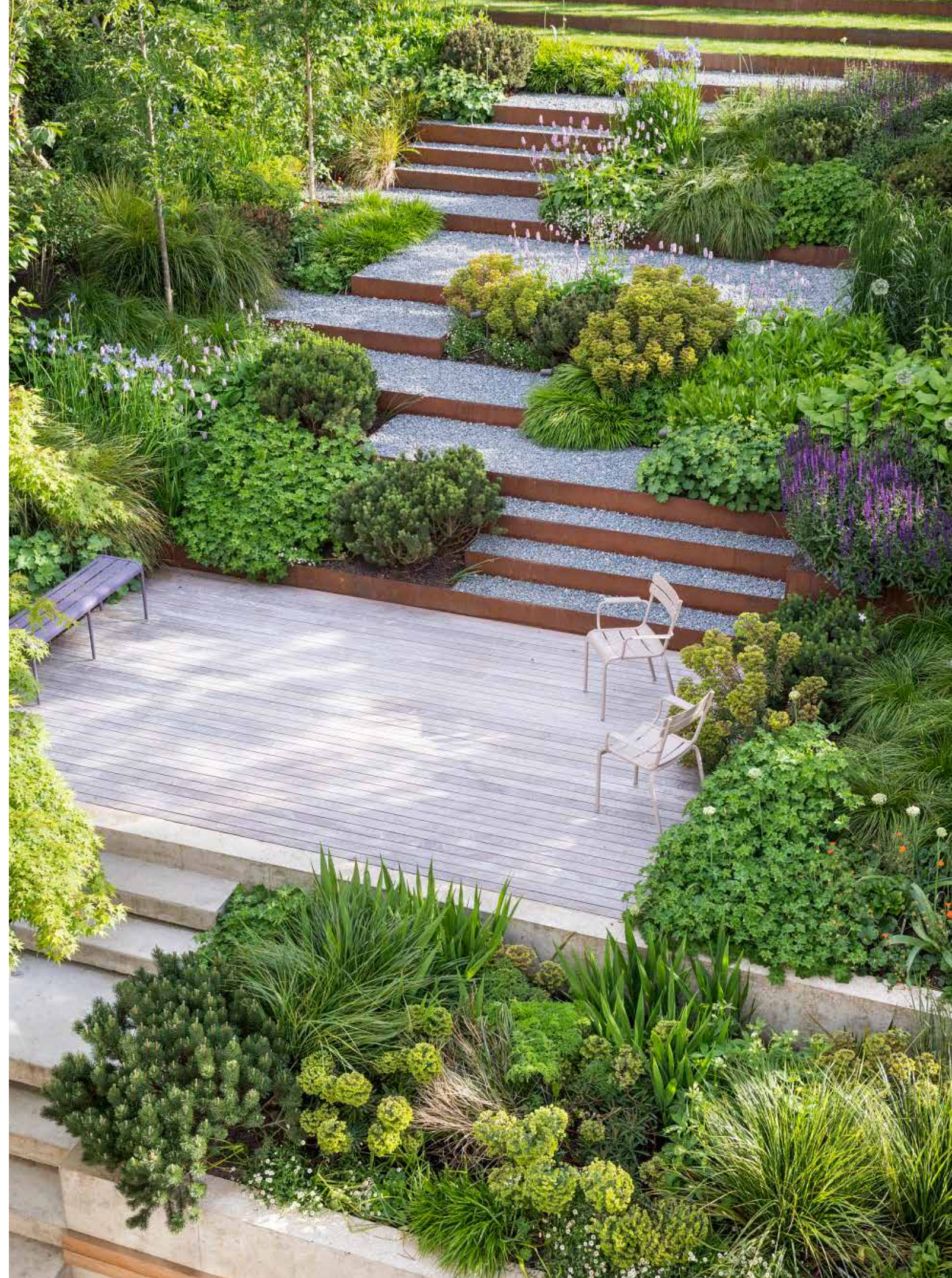
Corten steel
In situ poured concrete
Hardwood lpe timber
Permeable resin paving
Gravel with cedagravel stabilisation under

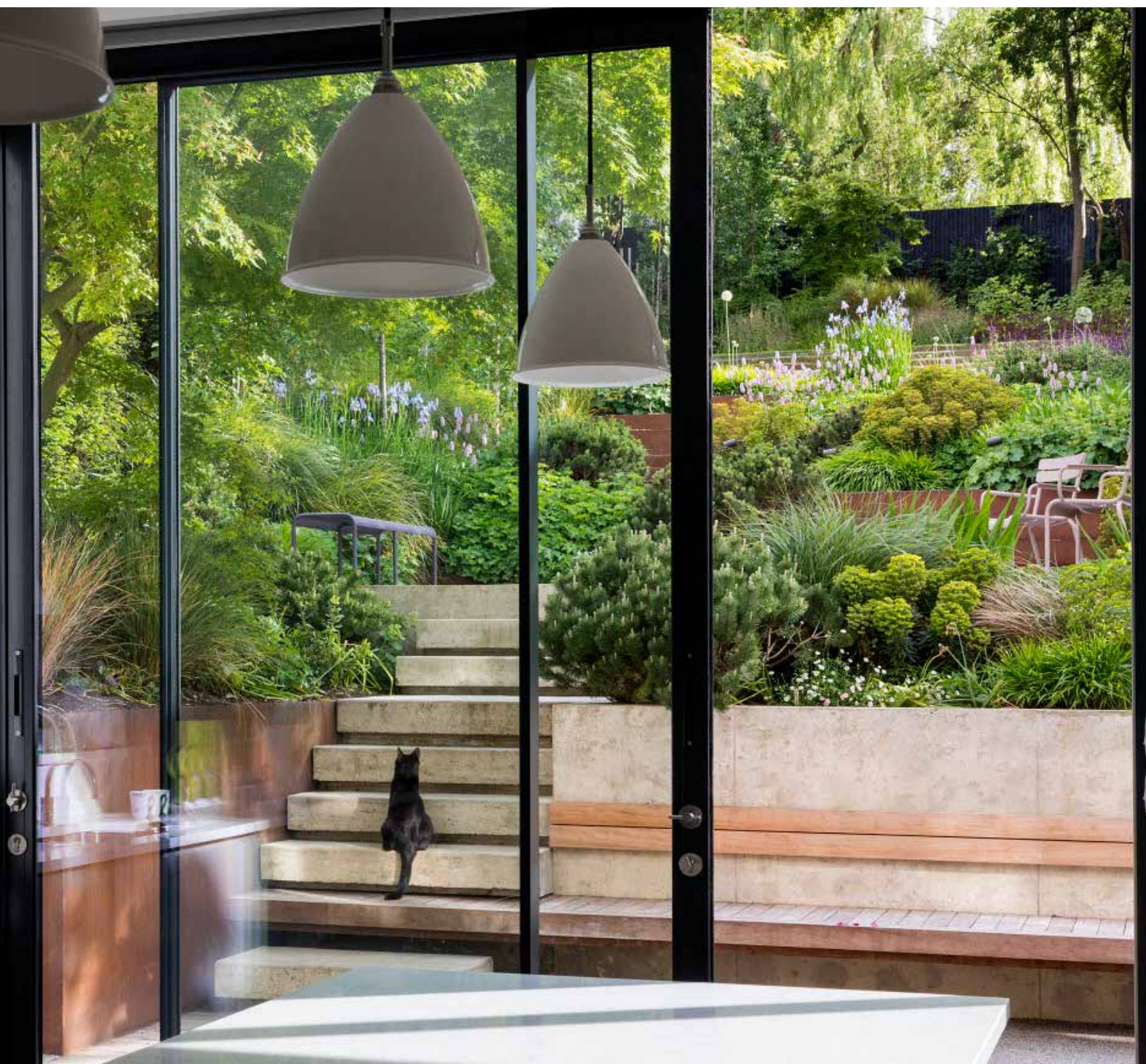


Clockwise: Gravel terraces soften the hard landscaping; planting features *Iris sibirica* 'Perry's Blue', *Allium* 'Mount Everest', rhododendrons, *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna', *Calamagrostis* x *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster', *Hakonechloa macra*, *Pinus mugo*, *Persicaria bistorta* 'Superba'; garden plan design; view of the garden from above, showing the Corten steel edged gravel steps, planting includes *Euphorbia* x *martini*, *Pinus mugo*, *Geranium* 'Rozanne' and *Persicaria bistorta* 'Superba'



'It was a challenging brief, basically a complete rebuild, but Sara Jane approached the job with curiosity and enthusiasm. She is hugely experienced and has a deep knowledge of plants, building materials, methods, and an unfaltering eye for aesthetic and details.' – client testimonial





Above: View from inside house through sliding glass doors to the terraced garden outside

Betula (birch) species, acers, and *Prunus Yedoensis* (Japanese flowering cherry). These created the framework, providing much needed screening from the neighbours, and gently merging into the woodland backdrop.

The under-storey of planting is first created with repeating domes of

Pinus Mugo Mugo (Dwarf Mountain Pine) and *Euphorbia characias wulfenii* (Mediterranean spurge), *Taxus* (yew) hedging and *Osmanthus* (sweet olive) provide a soft delineation of boundaries. Existing rhododendrons have been shaped to create a sculptural backdrop, that in spring bring forth a riot of pinks and purples, and have influenced our planting palette during these months. After the soft blues and pinks of

spring, geums herald the warmer, fiery colours of summer. Grasses link the seasons and blur the transition. The rear woodland is a far more muted palette, of lush green foliage, with dashes of white and blue. Bulbs create the final weave in the tapestry; white *Narcissus*, snowdrops, bluebells, tulips, *Camassia* and alliums appear throughout the months, populating some of the quieter spots early in the year. **DE**