GET INTO THE zone

Section your garden into **BESPOKE AREAS** and it'll immediately feel bigger and better. Here's how...

Smart design solutions

PHOTO: TEAK.COM

▲ SECTION WITH SCREENS

One of the easiest options is to add screens, choosing one, two or more and lining them up or positioning at angles. There are all sorts to choose from including wicker, trellis, steel, plastic and wood to suit your garden style. Most screens come with the option of installing them in the ground or popping them on feet so they're freestanding, which allows you to move them about as and where you want. We're seeing more and more moveable screens coming onto the market such as this stunning Barlow Tyrie Woodland Teak Screen (£1,265, hayesgardenworld.co.uk). Norfolk Leisure have also introduced the Java Room Divider (£800, stewarts.co.uk). They're pretty pricey at the moment but we're expecting to see this new trend quickly filter down to the more affordable end of the market.

Ikea's Slättö outdoor privacy screen is a cheap alternative at £75. Or create your own screen on wheels by fixing castors to Ikea's Äpplarö panelled bench (£96, ikea.com).

Small gardens, big ideas

▲ LINE UP LARGE POTS

This idea is super simple and cheap! Fill oversized matching planters with tall statement plants and line them up along the area you want to zone off.

Upgrade a cheap plastic planter (bmstores.co.uk have a good choice from £10) with Rust-Oleum Textured Effect Multi-Surface Spray Paint (£10/400ml, diy.com) – choose from a range of textures such as concrete, stone and iron.

▶ DEFINE WITH DIFFERENT FLOORING

One of the most dramatic ways to zone your plot is to use a different ground covering for each section. This solution works as a quick upgrade to an existing garden too – just replace part of your lawn and/or paving with gravelled and decked sections.

This L-shaped garden uses four different types of ground material to form distinct zones. Large porcelain pavers create a sleek patio area, plank pavers define a secluded seating space, a bed of bricks marks the outdoor dining room, and a wide channel of gravel links them all together.

Use furniture and planters in the same tone to bring the different zones together, as has been done here with the warm-toned wood and Corten steel planters.

GARDEN DESIGN: PUUR GROENPROJECTEN. LOCATION: FAM. WILTINK, NL

There's a simple way to make *any* garden look more interesting and that's to zone it. Zoning is simply garden designer-speak for creating distinct spaces within your plot, each with a different purpose or use. It's easily achieved in gardens of all shapes and sizes and it not only makes it look more interesting, it also creates the illusion of a bigger plot, improves privacy, and can help disguise any problem areas.

Most suburban gardens are already partially zoned, with a paved patio for seating and a lawn rest-of-the-garden area, and many use raised beds to section the space further. But you can be much, much cleverer than that! Zoning your garden can be done in all sorts of ways from simple to spectacular, cheap as chips to break the bank, and it'll transform your outside space from boring to breathtaking. We've done the hard work for you by sourcing the most stylish and achievable ideas that will make your garden more gorgeous as well as improve its proportions, whatever your budget may be.

▲ LOVE LOW WALLS

Using low-level walls around 60cm high will effectively zone your garden without chopping it up. When you're sitting down you'll feel like you're secluded in a smaller space, then when you stand up your view will widen to enjoy the overall space of your plot. If you've got room then a higher wall at the end of your garden makes a destination feature. Here it cleverly houses a recess to give the feel of a fireplace for an outside lounge. Call in a builder to get a professional result and if you can stretch to it, pay the extra for self-cleaning render to keep your walls looking good without any effort from you.

Ensure the low-level walls are a minimum of 20cm wide, and top with wood or flat-top coping so they can double up as extra seating.

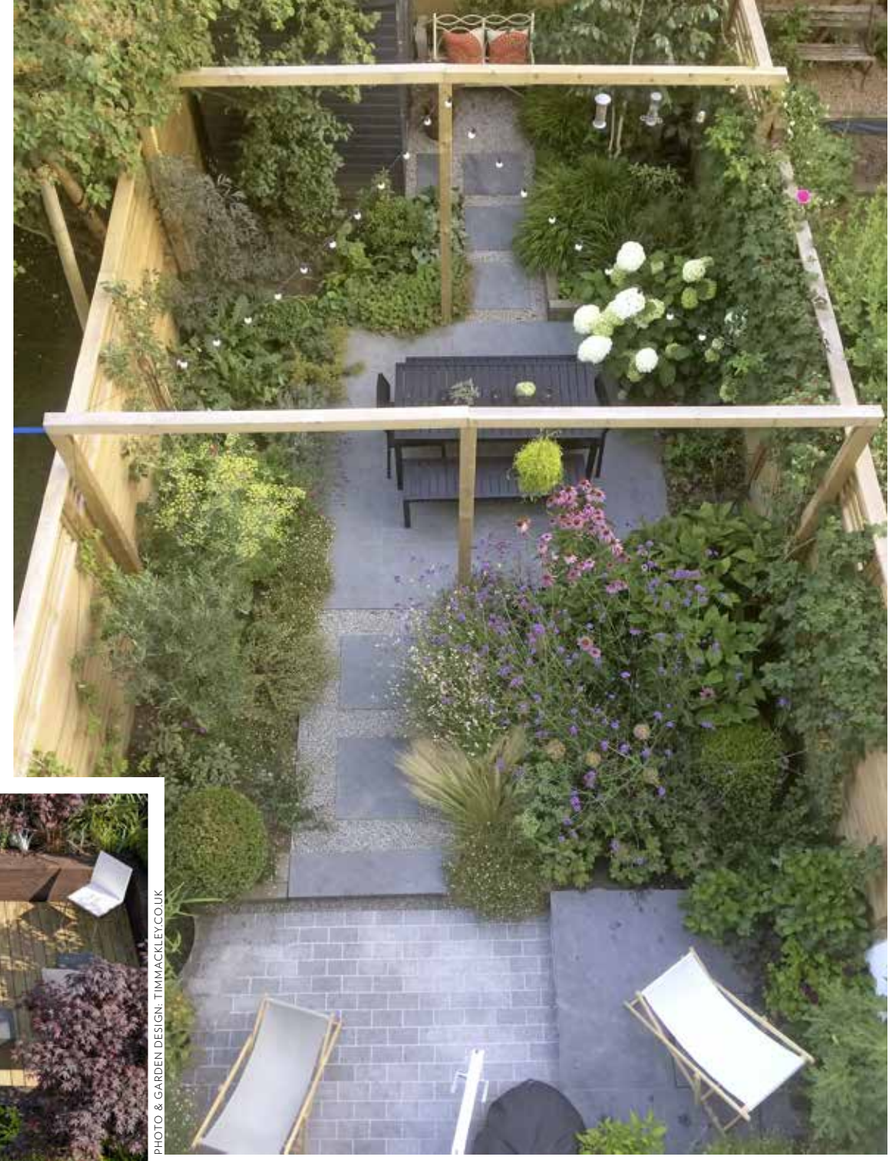

PHOTO & GARDEN DESIGN: TIMMACKLEY.CO.UK

On a budget?

Try these three quick-fire solutions to zone your plot without spending a fortune.

1 Add a trellis planter to separate an area, and fill it with pretty blooms. Newsome Rattan Planter Box with Trellis, **£72.99** *wayfair.co.uk*

2 Line up a couple of long planters rather than go to the expense of building raised beds. Durdica Dark Grey Plastic Hexagonal Trough 100cm, **£68** *diy.com*

3 Position a pair of trees in matching pots to create an 'entrance' to a zone. King Sago Palm Trees in Flared Black Planters, **£79.95** *gardeningexpress.co.uk*

▲ ADD A CHANGE OF LEVEL

Creating a step-up, step-down in your garden will immediately make you feel like you're moving from one space into another. It's also a clever way to solve any slight sloping issues. Rather than adding a raised deck at the end of your plot, try siting it halfway, across the width of the lawn, to create three zones rather than two. Or how about digging out a section of lawn, around 30-60cm deep, and laying gravel on top of a weed membrane, with edging all around, to create a sunken room?

It's quick to build a deck with an Easy Deck Patio Kit (1.5 x 1.5m, £200.09, edecks.co.uk), which includes decking boards, decking joists and fixing kit.

TRY THIS!
To build your own zoning water rill, dig a channel, sink a plastic or stainless-steel reservoir and add a water pump kit (try primrose.co.uk)

◀ DIVIDE YOUR OVERHEAD SPACE

Zoning of smallish gardens adds more interest, and using the area overhead saves precious ground space. Arches, pergolas and taut wires clad with climbers can all be situated to create two or three different zones. If you're handy with a screwdriver, install two sets of horizontal timber beams, with central vertical uprights, across the full width of your garden. This will give a widening effect and create a framework for lights and climbers as well as subtly dividing the garden. This garden, designed by Tim Mackley Garden Design (timmackley.co.uk), successfully uses this technique to create an area for sunbathing with plants in pots nearest the house, a dining area in the centre, and an informal bench seating area at the far end. A large flowerbed acts as a soft and airy partition between zones.

If you don't fancy any DIY then a couple of Gardman Extra Wide Garden Arches (£44.99 each, marshalls garden.com) gives you the effect for very little effort.

GARDEN DESIGN: EMMA GRIFFIN

◀ USE TREES TO CREATE AIRY ROOMS

It doesn't need to be all hard work and hard landscaping to add interest. To zone your garden without drastically changing it but still create different areas, divide your vertical space with the addition of some pleached umbrella trees. Also known as parasol trees, these are single stemmed trees that have been trained over a bamboo or metal frame to create a horizontal 'roof' of leaves. Site them around the edges of a dining space to create a canopy of leaves that makes the area feel separate from the rest of the garden without closing it off.

Pleached trees can be expensive but it's easy to make your own with sweet gum trees (*Liquidambar styraciflua*, £41.99/9L pot, primrose.co.uk) which will happily accept you trimming their canopies into whatever shape you wish.

◀ BI-SECT YOUR LAWN

How stylish does this lawn look? Just adding a path that cuts through it at an angle has simply and easily created two different zones. You could try a similar idea on your lawn by laying wood-effect pavers across its width. Putting it on a gentle angle softens the effect so it doesn't look too grid-like.

Dig a shallow channel in your lawn, the same width as the length of the paver but a little deeper, fill with sand then lay planks on top.

▶ GROW SLIM BORDERS OF HAZY BLOOMS

A beautiful and natural way to create zones is with clever planting, enclosing a seating area to make it feel more secluded, or breaking up a big section of lawn. If you've got a long garden then try adding two or three narrow flowerbeds that stretch widthways partially across the lawn, on alternate sides. Plant with tall, frothy, floaty flowers such as *Verbena bonariensis*, *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing' and *Valeriana pyrenaica*, and grasses such as golden oats (*Stipa gigantea*) to create see-through partitions.

Show off the borders as dusk falls with a few solar spikes. Try Habitat Solar Marker Lights, £10/10, argos.co.uk.

FEATURE: JULES BARTON-BRECK. PHOTOS: THEJOYOFPLANTS.CO.UK, ALAMY, LIVING4MEDIA, SHUTTERSTOCK, MARIANNE MARJERUS, GAP PHOTOS/MODESTE HERWIG