

# INNER CIRCLE

Mellow brick walls, meticulous paving and well-considered planting take shape in this country-style design in west London



**DESIGNER PROFILE** Karen Rogers swapped a career as a city banker for garden design and, having studied at Capel Manor, set up her studio in 2009. She has won awards at RHS Hampton Court Flower Show and is shortlisted for a Society of Garden Designers 2017 award for this beautiful design.

## What did the garden look like before?

When the owner moved here, the garden was a flat, paved car park with large sliding gates on the street side. The view from the kitchen was of parked cars, the street beyond and some tall buildings opposite. The garden lacked any sense of privacy and there were no plants. To say that it was ugly would be an understatement.

## Can you tell us about the design brief?

The owner asked for a design that would screen her house from the street and surrounding properties and provide enough space for a dining table that could seat up to six people. She also requested a secluded area where she could enjoy coffee in the mornings. She is a keen gardener who loves country gardens and wanted that look for her city plot; she was also happy for me to include lots of plants.

## How did you come up with a design solution?

I think circular designs look great in small gardens as they pull the focus away from the boundaries and into the centre of the space. I have included a sunken area, too, which helps to make the garden look larger. A brick wall shields the property from the street, while pleached hornbeams add extra height and a country-style wooden door makes a lovely focal point. The door also lends a sense of mystery, suggesting there is more to see beyond it. The central seating area is surrounded by raised beds, which are filled with trees, shrubs and climbers that create the feel of a cocooning, leafy glade. I included space for a smaller table on a raised terrace by the folding doors to the house, where the owner can sit in the mornings.

## What plants have you included?

The owner loves pastel colours so I have chosen plants that provide soft colour in the spring and summer, but which also look good all year round. For permanent structure, I have included Himalayan birch, *Buxus sempervirens* (box), dwarf pittosporum, *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' (variegated dogwood) and *Viburnum davidii*, which has evergreen leaves that look as though they have been pleated. I also planted a *trachelospermum* (star jasmine), which has small, highly perfumed flowers in summer. For dramatic impact, the big white blooms of *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' are hard to beat.

## Do you have any tips for ensuring year-round interest?

Use the landscaping materials to make a distinctive design that will provide a feature to look at, whatever the season. In this



## “Use the landscaping materials to will provide an interesting feature

space, I have alternated reclaimed bricks and sandstone to create concentric circles. I also like to use a combination of evergreens and deciduous plants that retain their shape through the winter. The Himalayan birch has brilliant white bark and the dogwood's stems are scarlet; together, they gleam in the border after the leaves have fallen. I also like to use hornbeam, which is deciduous, but instead of losing all its leaves, the foliage on the young growth turns a copper colour and stays on the branches. Hydrangeas are also very useful, as their big flowers turn into buff-coloured seedheads that look like paper flowers in winter and early spring. Here, these

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are offset with spring-flowering bulbs, including tulips and alliums, to ensure there are flowers in the garden all year round.

## Which plants do you recommend for topiary in small spaces?

While *buxus* is the best plant for topiary, it can suffer from a fungal disease called box blight, and may also be attacked by caterpillars that can strip it in no time. To keep caterpillars at bay, I use pheromone traps, which contain a compound that lures them away. Alternatively, try less problematic plants such as *Ilex crenata* (Japanese holly), *Euonymus japonicus* 'Microphyllus' and shrubby *Lonicera nitida* (honeysuckle).

## KEY PLANTS

- 1| *Rosa* 'Madame Alfred Carrière'
- 2| *Buxus sempervirens* (box topiary)
- 3| *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum'
- 4| *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemonti* (West Himalayan birch)
- 5| *Salvia nemorosa* 'Caradonna'
- 6| *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'
- 7| *Trachelospermum jasminoides* with *Rosa* 'Climbing Paul Ledé'
- 8| Clematis 'Black Prince'
- 9| *Eriogonum karwinskianus* (Mexican fleabane)
- 10| *Viburnum davidii*
- 11| *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima'
- 12| *Carpinus betulus* (hornbeam)
- 13| *Rosa* 'Loeborg'
- 14| *Knaulia macedonica*
- 15| *Viburnum opulus* (guelder rose)
- 16| *Heuchera* 'Rave On'
- 17| *Helleborus argutifolius* 'Silver Lace' (not in flower)
- 18| *Hedera helix* (ivy)

## PLANT SUPPLIERS

**Burncoose Nurseries**, 01209 860336, burncoose.co.uk.  
**Crocus**, 01344 578000, crocus.co.uk.  
**Jackson's Nurseries**, 01782 502741, jacksonsnurseries.co.uk.

## LANDSCAPE SUPPLIERS

The paving is reclaimed brick from London Reclaimed Brick Merchants, 020 8452 1124, lrbrn.com, and Kotah Brown sandstone from London Stone, 01753 212950, londonstone.co.uk. The wooden door and trellis are from The Garden Trellis Co, 01255 688361, gardentrellis.co.uk, and painted in French Gray, Farrow & Ball, 01202 876141, farrow-ball.com. Bordeaux furniture, Neptune, 01793 427450, neptune.com.

## GARDEN DESIGN

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