



Native, mature trees cocoon and enclose the garden, which is planted with a natural palette of green and white and imbues a strong sense of being close to nature

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

With its untamed beauty, Marian Boswall's award-winning garden design delivered the urban sanctuary one London family craved

WORDS JACKY HOBBS PHOTOGRAPHY JASON INGRAM

The concept of creating a garden sanctuary has never held more relevance or appeal. But it is not a new concept and landscape designer Marian Boswall has drawn upon ancient influences to create a soulful garden that meets the needs of her client, a yoga teacher and her two small children. In tune with nature and mindful of treading lightly, even in an urban space, Marian's conscientious design is sleight of hand, deeply symbolic and incredibly functional.

The property, cupped by the winding River Thames in a bend by Stamford Brook, is a former hunting lodge. In the awkward L-shaped elbow of the neglected rear garden, many original, mature and indigenous trees still prevail. It is a joy and testament to both client and designer that these trees remain intact 'save a single bough we needed to shorten in order to tuck the new yoga studio into the far corner,' explains Marian, delighted her client wanted the garden to be as natural as she did. However, structure, purpose and play were also required.

Despite its angular configuration, Marian's design relies on soft spirals and circles – 'curves are not nearly as bossy as straight lines,' she explains, 'you can choose which way to meander, lengthen the journey with a winding pathway, wend this way or that. Spirals prolong a journey, particularly with little feet running around pathways to find a route.' This simple tool allows Marian to seemingly amplify the garden and also to introduce the ancient Japanese concept *miegakure*, which translates as 'hide and reveal', whereby an element of the garden is concealed before being gradually revealed. By extending the semi-circular remnant of a yew hedge to create an 'S' shape, Marian was able to introduce

two secluded gardens: a scented rose garden and a secret hideaway for the children. The plastic-free play area has a domed, natural living willow hide beside a charming, natural stone 'rain garden'. Ingeniously, water dashes onto pebbles below the stone sink, courses downstream to a shallow pool, which once filled, gradually drains clear away.

Unseen from the house, in the swirl of the garden's crook lies a twirling, mossy labyrinth, an interactive space for both walking meditation and joyous child play. Fringed with wild flowers and cushioned with star-flowered Irish moss, *Sagina subulata*, the stonework pattern is soft underfoot.

The garden is cocooned by living walls – existing trees, indigenous hedging and fencing clad with climbers. 'The clients wished to retain the original fencing so to overcome aesthetics and increase the biodiversity we planted masses of evergreen, some flowering, climbers including ivy, *Hedera helix* 'Goldchild', *Hydrangea seemannii* and perfumed spring-flowering *Clematis armandii*,' says Marian.

Dining and entertaining is enjoyed beneath the salvaged pergola close to the house. In front of the yoga studio there's an edible hedge, where ripened berries can be picked. A gentle sweep of more formal lawn, with resting yew balls, creates an increased sense of openness near to the house, in contrast to the naturalistic 'wilderness' that draws you into the sanctuary of the garden beyond. This design is many-faceted. It fulfils a family's ambition for sanctuary, work and play in a small urban enclave yet its essence is rooted in the nurturing goodness of nature. 🌿

■ The London Sanctuary Garden won the *Homes & Gardens* Design Award for Best Small Garden 2021, marianboswall.com

“SOIL IS ONE OF OUR BIGGEST CARBON SEQUESTERS, SO IT'S VITAL TO PLANT A GARDEN UP IN SUBTLE LAYERS TO HELP PROTECT THE SOIL AND LOCK IN THE NUTRIENTS”



GARDEN GUIDE

ORIENTATION Northwest.

SOIL TYPE London clay.

SPECIAL FEATURES Labyrinth, hide and reveal gardens, rain garden, living willow and chestnut shelters, yoga studio, edible hedge.

GARDEN DESIGN Marian Boswall
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Loops and circles create a fluid, gentle design with stone-set pathways that meander round flower beds and into the labyrinth beyond