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# A Mini Marvel



Don't ever complain that your garden is too small, you can always make it look fantastic – you just need to know how. Garden Goddess, **Pat Fox**, shares some top tips on how to make even the tiniest of plots look a million dollars.

**4** Maltese Road, Chelmsford is a Victorian semi-detached, close to the town centre. Owner, Paul Edwards, leads a busy life with an executive position in London so he called Aralia for some expert advice to work closely with him on a total renovation of his garden. With Paul's tiny postage stamp of outdoor space, we had some huge challenges! But we were very privileged to work with a client who wanted only the very best and a fantastic eye for detail.

The net result is a garden that is visually stunning and was a real collaboration between owner and designer. The garden actually won the Principal Award, for the Bali Landscape Design Excellence Award 2010 which is a national competition of professional Bali members. So here we show you how to take away the very best bits and wiggle them into your very own garden.

### Overall planning

Examine the space you have and how it can be best used. Paul's front garden was simply a long path down the side of the garage to the front door. But, it was actually larger than Paul's rear garden (50m versus 34m square) and the only place there was sun in the evening. So, we decided the front garden should be another 'back garden', somewhere private for Paul to sit.

We designed a contemporary curved slate bench, and placed this within a circular Paddlestone patio, finished it all off with a circular planting bed surround with a dramatic metal sculpture. Each of these elements can be done in a less expensive way. Circular stone patios are available as setts from companies such as Marshalls; stone benches can be purchased from architectural salvage yards or garden centres and a whole array of good value sculptures can be found on the internet.

### Patios & Paths

Small spaces need intrinsic detail and generally the use of smaller paving sizes works much better than using large paving slabs. We used Silver Granite Setts 100 x 100 x 100mm, mixed with Black Paddlestone's (cut in half and laid vertically) to create real interest on patios and the paths which weaved their way throughout the garden. You can edge these really easily with easy-fit Excel Edge to give a smart, contemporary finish.

### Boundaries

Walls and fences are so important in small gardens, eventually you want to screen most, if not all, of them – so that you blur the edges of the garden and no one can actually really see how small it is. We introduced a beautiful hardwood fence, and trellis in places, painted in a deep charcoal colour. Dark colours recede, and will make the garden look bigger, light/bright colours will pull the boundaries into the garden and make it feel smaller. Plant up with lots of lush evergreen plants such as Phyllostachys aurea (Bamboo), Phyllostachys nigra (Black Bamboo), Fatsia japonica, and shrubby climbers such as Lonciera halliana (Honeysuckle). Many climbers can easily be trained along boundaries.



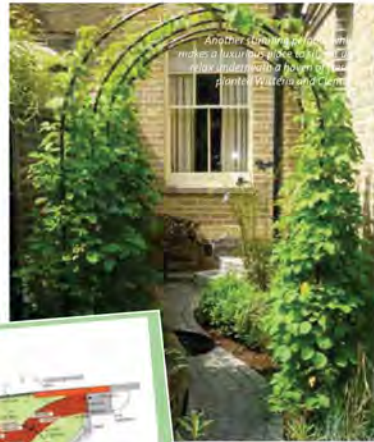
Part of the Presentation Plan for the Rear Garden, with lots of winding paths and journeys into different spaces, giving this smaller garden a much more spacious feel.



Alliums beaming in the foreground with the blue sky above. Paul's chair creating a stunning vista away.



High quality paving: Stone paving, granite setts and aluminium edging to give it class & style.



Another climbing plant, which makes a beautiful arch over the path, which is underpinned by a row of the plants Wisteria and Clematis.



The Front Garden plan, with one winding path taking you past the garage into Paul's second 'back garden' where he can sit on his granite bench, relax and enjoy the sun hitting the beautiful plants of an evening.



An elegant ironwork pergola to give the seating area a more secluded feel.



Paul's the last but not least, he can sit on his granite bench, relax and enjoy the sun hitting the beautiful plants of an evening.

### Eyesores

Look at what you see just beyond your garden. Does your neighbour have an ugly shed or greenhouse poking above your fence? Is there a pylon nearby? Look to plant items, or add features to mask or deflect from what is beyond – don't just live with it! From Paul's lounge he looked out onto the back of his garage. It was a view he thought he was stuck with, but then together we came up with the idea of introducing a green wall. He now looks onto a beautiful lush evergreen wall, that provides both colour and texture all year round and is an amazing backdrop to the rest of the garden.

### Height & Scale

Don't just introduce height around the edges of the garden. Try to introduce height within the body of the garden with either a simple metal or wooden archway, or a specimen tree – by doing this you introduce a sense of enclosure, and privacy, and it helps to define the space. A simple archway with climbers growing up and over creates a lot of visual interest, can lift fragrance to head level and can really help to frame and create views within the garden. Plant quick growing climbers up pergolas and arches such as Akebia quinata, Trachelospermum jasminoides (Star Jasmine), Wisteria sinensis, Clematis (huge range of species) and Rose species. We introduced both a curved metal archway and a round metal pergola into the rear garden space, and we even found space for a shed!

### Furniture

We managed to cram in 3 seating areas into Paul's tiny back yard (34 sq.metres) - a cast iron bench just outside his back door; a custom designed black galvanised Pergola with small wicker table and 2 chairs underneath; an adorable 'Love Seat' in weather resistant wicker, with sumptuous cushions inside – somewhere to have a leisurely glass of wine and listen to music (yes we installed music inside the love seat itself).

Work out where the sun is at what times of day, and think about how you want to use your garden space, then you can figure out exactly what type of furniture you need and where to put it. You may decide you don't need 3 spaces, but Maltese Road does demonstrate that if you want several areas you can squeeze them in. There is a huge range of Outdoor Rattan furniture available at anything from inexpensive to luxurious, ranging from smaller sizes to large full blown corner sofas. They require no maintenance, and they don't need covering in the winter. They definitely get our vote for style and value.

### Lighting

If your budget can stretch to include some lighting focus on some ground level spike lights for up-lighting interesting foliage plants ie under arches and pergolas, and under any attractive trees. Also think about overhead lights in areas where you plan to dine or read.

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**SGD/RHS OPEN GARDEN**  
**SEPTEMBER 25TH**

This gorgeous garden has been chosen by the Society of Garden Designers, in conjunction with the RHS, to be part of the SGD/RHS National Open Garden Scheme (new this year), and will be open to the public on Sunday September 25th from 12 noon to 6pm. So if you have an hour or two to spare do pop over. Further details of other open gardens can be found at [www.sgd.org.uk/events](http://www.sgd.org.uk/events)

**Inexpensive metal sculptures** from Ironvein  
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**Aluminium edging** from Excel Edge  
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The compact yet spacious front garden, with silver and granite stone paving, lush planting and the vertical Green Wall, which did a fantastic job at disguising the unsightly garage wall which could be viewed from Paul's Living Room.