

Reader
MAKEOVER

“We enjoy Med-style charm all year round”

Clever design and 60-year-old olive trees give an exotic edge to **NORMAN AND MAHIN HILL'S** stunning garden

A light-filled orangery was the perfect addition to Norman and Mahin Hill's Bristol bungalow, creating a bright and airy space where they could sit and unwind. But the garden that it overlooked didn't quite match up. “Although we'd got the bottom half of the garden just how we wanted it, with shaped lawns and fully planted up borders, we weren't happy with the patio area at the top,” says Norman. “Having created this fantastic Mediterranean feel with the new orangery, we wanted it to continue outside. The old patio had to go!”

But the couple wanted more than just a new patio, they wanted a well-designed and practical outdoor living space where they could entertain friends. It had to continue the Mediterranean theme but also blend with the more traditional lawns. So, with the old patio removed and a large part of the garden pretty much rubble, the couple turned to landscaping and design company GreenBird Gardening. “We loved their ideas, and they were so helpful,” says Norman. “They kept us informed at every stage of the process, and even took us on shopping trips so we could see what was on offer.”

To reflect the style of the existing garden, GreenBird director Chris Rixton envisaged a smart new terrace with the lead edge tracing a graceful curve. “It would have been easy to build a square patio, but we didn't want to end up with a large empty space at the top of the garden,” he says. “The curved shape was very complex to build and required some real craftsmanship but it was key to the success of the project. It created an ‘infinity’ feeling of space as it merged into the existing lawn. The shape also allowed us to create a raised bed at either side, so that from the patio, the planting is seemingly all around, further connecting the new area with the old.”

Having looked at several options on their shopping expeditions, Norman and Mahin decided on ‘Cassetta Greige’ Italian porcelain paving for the terrace. This has the appearance of bleached and weathered wood, giving a Mediterranean appeal but crucially needing no maintenance. The ‘planks’ were laid horizontally to create a feeling of width in the long garden. A neat finish was achieved with weather-resistant Cor-ten steel edging to pick up the detailing of the orangery.

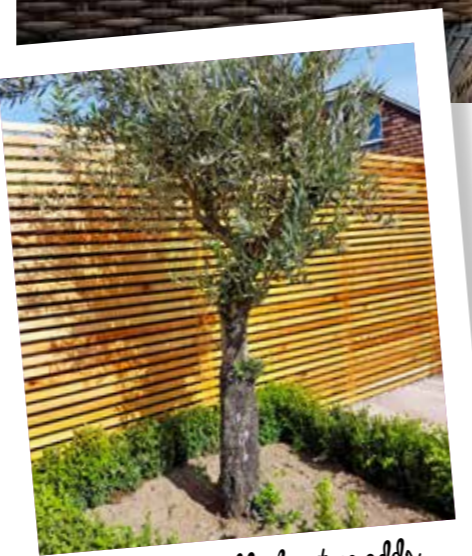


1 DEEP BORDERS are filled with a mix of colours, shapes and textures.

1 A MEDITERRANEAN-STYLE urn makes a stunning centrepiece.

3 THE CURVED EDGE of the patio complements the curves of the lawn.

THAT'S CLEVER!
A curved lawn not only looks stylish, it leads your eye around the garden, making it seem bigger than it is



A 60-year-old olive tree adds a true taste of the Med



CEDAR SCREENS define the patio and make an attractive backdrop for planting.

WORDS: DI WARDLE. PHOTOS: CHRIS RIXTON. MORE INFORMATION: GREENBIRDGARDENING.CO.UK

BEFORE



The old patio wasn't doing the garden any favours!

OUR GARDEN PLAN

LOCATION

A 1960's detached bungalow in Bristol.

THE LOOK

Sunny Mediterranean blends perfectly with curved lawns and colourful borders.

SITE AND SOIL

Size 60m² patio in a 160m² garden
Faces South
Soil Clay

OUR BUDGET

Paving **£12,000**
Plants/trees **£3,000**
Soil preparation and planting **£1,000**
Screen fencing **£8,000**
TOTAL: £24,000

HOW LONG IT TOOK

Groundwork **2 days**
Soil preparation **1 day**
Patio laying **8 days**
Building screen fence **2 days**
Building paths and laying gravel **1 day**
Planting **1 day**
TOTAL: 15 days

PLANT HEAVEN
Make the most of sun-loving shrubs if your garden faces south



LOW BUXUS hedging frames the olive trees.

PORCELAIN PAVING carries the orangery into the garden.

THE VIEW from the orangery: mixing old and new.

“Our low-maintenance garden feels more spacious.”

The stars of the show have to be the two gnarled olive trees, each over 60 years old, that take pride of place in the raised beds. “We sourced these from one of our specialist suppliers,” explains Chris. “As they’re true olive trees, rather than being grafted from another rootstock, they have the same tolerance to weather as those that live in the Med. They actually benefit from a cold winter, as it makes them crop well in the summer, and they will soak up the sun in this south-facing garden.”

To add a touch of formality, the olive trees are surrounded by buxus hedging. Each bed is offset by cedarwood screens that line the three enclosed sides of the patio, demarcating it as a separate space functionally. This is Norman’s

favourite part of the scheme. “When the panels went up, they completely transformed the look of the whole garden,” he says. “Plus, the planting looks fantastic against them. They really make the Mediterranean plants stand out.” The screens were bespoke-designed by Chris, with batons of Western Red Cedar screwed on to a rot-resistant softwood frame. Again, a feeling of space is created as the eye is drawn across the horizontal slats.

With orangery and patio complete, and striking planting to match, Norman and Mahin have the garden they always wanted. “The new matches the old perfectly and we couldn’t be more delighted,” says Norman.



Festuca 'Elijah Blue' grasses soften the industrial steel edging

THE PERFECT PLACE

for a drink and a chat, natural textures and bright cushions give a fresh and welcoming feel.