



SPLIT-LEVEL SPACE

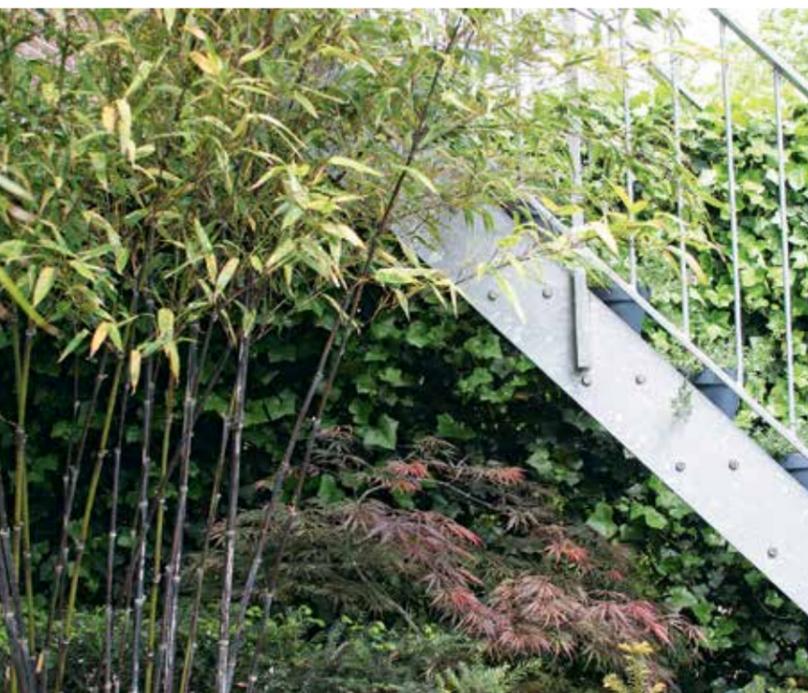
Measured RESPONSE

Harmonious planting and a well-considered layout give this compact Dutch garden a richly textural feel

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OPPOSITE PAGE Marijn chose a restrained blue-grey and green palette for the main garden (left) and roof terrace (right), creating an easy link between the two areas. The lush main garden has symmetrical plantings of large-leaved *Hydrangea macrophylla* 'Nikko Blue', as well as pots of *Lavandula stoechas*, *Santolina chamaecyparissus* 'Lemon Queen' and *Agapanthus* 'Blue Triumphator'. **RIGHT** Box cubes provide structure and purple campanula a cluster of colour on the sunny roof terrace, which Marijn uses for "breakfast and beer".



Often in life, it is the small moments that shape our futures. For Marijn Vereijken that moment came when he was knee deep in brackish water, cleaning out the pond of a Japanese garden. At the time, Marijn was working as an artisan baker, supplementing his income by helping to maintain a large private plot. While he had a natural affinity with landscape – he initially trained as a forester – he had never given much thought to a related career. Yet, standing in the pool, he was incredibly moved by the feeling of being surrounded by plants, a feeling that, with hindsight, he realises was perfectly timed.

The experience was the catalyst that set Marijn on a new path. Retraining as a landscape architect in the early 1990s, just as fellow Dutchman Piet Oudolf was rising to fame, he found himself amid radical change in the world of garden design. Inspired, he visited as many gardens as he could, including those of Oudolf, taking extensive notes about specific plants and combinations that excited him.

Shortly after qualifying, Marijn made the first of his own gardens, one that he says “contained everything”. A decade later, he bought a new-build property that combined studio and living area, and developed the garden there. In contrast to his first design, this is a masterclass in restraint and mastery of space.

While the site was smaller than he might have wanted, it gave Marijn an opportunity to create an outdoor space on two levels that offered him two different experiences: the first, a sense of being immersed within the planting; the second, the pleasure of viewing the planting from above.

The plan rested on the relationship between two parallel spaces. One is a narrow corridor of stepping stones that runs from the rear gate to the roof terrace. The other, the main garden outside the office, leads through planting to a square terrace, then through a further band of planting to a bench set beneath a pergola. The vista is framed and interrupted along its length, while a low water feature on the central axis acts as a mirror and creates tension between the opposing geometric forms of circle and square.

Overall, Marijn has used a simple colour palette, choosing Belgian freestone (a grey limestone) to tie in with the existing steel staircase and aluminium windows. The emphasis was on form rather than flower colour, while limiting the leaf shapes to three basic types (large, linear and filigree) has allowed Marijn to create a richly textural space. Abundant layers of foliage climb and crawl everywhere, with fronds reaching out and trailing over as you pass. “I love that moment just before you cut things back, when the garden hovers between order and wilderness,” he says.

Seen from above, however, the wildness seems remarkably tamed. The box is clipped, the ivy trained over the straight lines of the walls and the bamboo contained to sway neatly in the borders. There is also a succession of floral highlights, the most dramatic being the wisteria, smothering the pergola throughout May with extra-long racemes of bi-coloured blue. “I perhaps regret the choice of blue – today, I would have gone for a white,” says Marijn. “But as I had to wait four years for it to bloom, I’m not going to change it now.” It is a minor detail in this original, sensitively considered garden, which seems as fresh and of the moment as it was the day it was created. □



OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP In the main garden, the terrace is paved in a grey limestone, which echoes the colour of the steel steps and windows and gives a sense of unity. A centrally placed water feature acts as a focal point.

OPPOSITE PAGE, BELOW Beneath the steps, *Phyllostachys nigra* (black bamboo) and *Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* (cut-leaved Japanese maple) reflect Marijn’s Japanese influences. Thinning the bamboo stems adds movement and transparency to the garden.

ABOVE The bench beneath the pergola is the perfect spot from which to enjoy the sweetly scented flowers of the wisteria.

RIGHT Anyone walking up the long path will feel cocooned by the surrounding yew, ivy and *Wisteria floribunda* ‘Multijuga’; and *Asarum europaeum* (wild ginger) hugging the edges of the stepping stones.

ILLUSTRATION SCOTT JESSOP



GARDEN GUIDE

Orientation The garden is south-facing.

Soil type The soil is clay and a 30cm top layer of sandy soil was applied.

Special features The garden is on two levels, with a densely planted main area and a roof terrace.

Design Marijn Vereijken, 0031 024 357 8976, hetbuitenland.nl.