



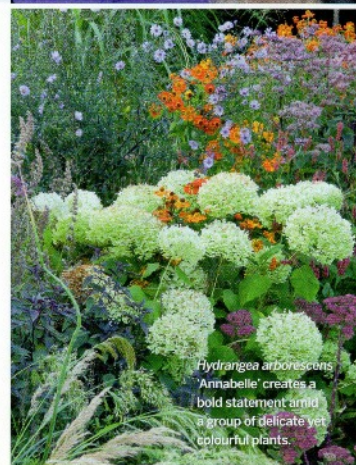
From a sheltered terrace close to the house, a gravel path coils through deep borders, bulging with colourful herbaceous perennials and ornamental grasses.



A *Sedum telephium* (Atropurpureum Group), 'Xenex', and *Panicaria amplexicaulis* 'Inverleith' add colour to the explosion of grasses.



Annie enjoys relaxing in her perfect late summer garden with her Jack Russell terrier, Myrtle.



*Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' creates a bold statement amid a group of delicate yet colourful plants.

## Path to a new beginning

Annie Godfrey's small suburban lawn with borders was dull and uninspiring until the drought of 2006 spurred her to embark on a radical rethink

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PHOTOGRAPHS MARIANNE MAJERUS

Searching for Annie Godfrey's house you know when you have found the right place because the tiny front garden is packed with so many interesting and usual plants. But, this is merely a taster for what awaits you behind the house.

Annie, a nurserywoman and gardener, has transformed her suburban back garden into a riot of colour, teeming with plants. For years she tinkered with what she describes as "a typical suburban garden: large lawn surrounded by narrow borders", which became easy to neglect. When the drought of 2006 added to its sorry state Annie decided to redesign and replant it.

Close to the house Annie has laid a terrace around a raised pool. During the

summer the area is filled with pots of tender perennials and succulents that bask in the south-facing aspect.

Where once there was a lawn, a gravel path, with plants tumbling on to it from the teeming borders, now winds its way along the garden's length. The planting, mainly perennials and grasses, is profuse and exuberant. Large-leaved plants, such as a pollarded *Paulownia* and *Dahlia imperialis*, provide a bold background to delicate flowers, while spires of evergreen *Ilex crenata* create a regular pulse throughout.

Her experience in the nursery means she was able to select the perfect cultivars for her design. *Molinia caerulea* subsp. *arundinacea* "Transparent", for example, >

### Key elements

WHAT Garden of semi-detached suburban house, with plants largely from owner's nursery ([www.daisyroots.com](http://www.daisyroots.com)).

WHERE North Hertfordshire.

SIZE 30m x 8.5m.

SOIL Free-draining, retentive neutral loam.

CONDITIONS Sheltered, south-facing.

SPECIAL FEATURES Plant-filled, exuberant planting scheme; borrowed views; sunken secret garden.

1 Terrace	4 Planted border
2 Raised pool	5 Sunken garden
3 Gravel path	6 Shed



By repeating flower shape and colour around the garden Annie adds rhythm and a feeling of space to the borders.



A distant church spire adds a sense of depth to the garden, while plantings of tall, airy plants, such as *Stipa gigantea*, pink-flowered *Nicotiana glauca* and *Verbena bonariensis* accentuate a sense of endless planting.



is much taller and more delicate than other cultivars and conveys well the airiness that Annie wanted to achieve in the borders. The flowers of *Hemerocallis* 'American Revolution' have just the depth of velvety darkness Annie was looking for. In fact her broad knowledge of plants permeates the garden.

At the end of the garden, where Annie and her partner Steve Machin can sit and relax, is a sunken, secret garden. Annie and Steve did the hard work of digging out the soil and building low retaining walls in soft oak. Here Annie favours plants with pastel-coloured flowers and fragrant foliage. Pots of herbs and scented-leaved pelargonium add to the perfume.

Like many gardens that use lots of perennials and grasses, it is at its best in

late summer. Annie is now working to extend the season by planting spring-flowering bulbs and woodland perennials under the later-flowering plants. With all the hard work to do in her gardening business and a nursery to run, surely she must be too tired at the end of a day to work on her own garden? "Not at all," she says. "This garden is food for my soul; it's never a chore, never hard work. I love this garden again." □

#### USEFUL INFORMATION

ADDRESS 8 Gosselin Road, Benego, Hertford SG14 3LG  
OPEN Open as part of the NGS ([www.ngs.org.uk](http://www.ngs.org.uk)) on 29 August and 30 September

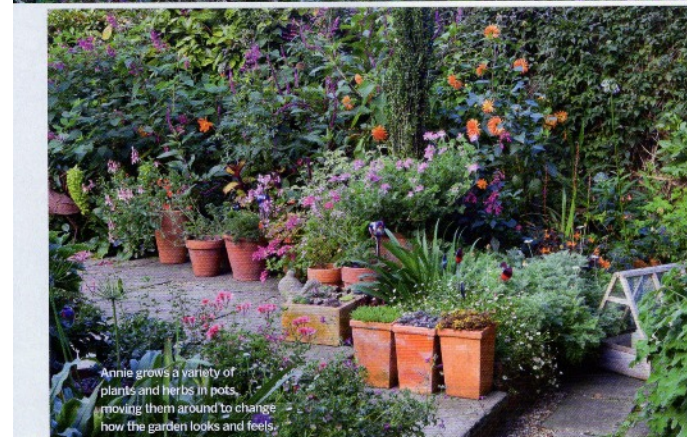
## ANNIE'S TIPS FOR SMALL SPACES

Take some advice from Annie to enhance your own small suburban plot

- 1 Make use of borrowed landscape.** Neighbouring trees, for example, can be incorporated into the background of your garden.
- 2 Make paths as wide as possible** to allow for plants growing over them. Narrow, pinched paths will make the garden feel small. The same goes for borders.
- 3 Don't be afraid to use large, architectural plants** in small gardens – they add drama.
- 4 Make the most of fences, walls and sheds for climbing plants.** As well as making the most of the space you have, they will help blur the edges of the garden.
- 5 Keep on top of the weeding and dead-heading.** Weeds and faded flowers catch the eye far more in smaller gardens than large ones.
- 6 Mulch in the spring to lock in moisture** and cut down on time spent weeding. Annie uses mushroom compost, which is low in nutrients but improves soil structure.
- 7 Stain perimeter fences a dark uniform colour.** Dark fences appear to recede.



At the end of the path steps lead down to a hidden sunken area edged with silver-leaved *Senecio cineraria* and *Dianthus* that work well in the evening light.



Annie grows a variety of plants and herbs in pots, moving them around to change how the garden looks and feels.



Zambesi Allium sculptures by Big Black House Design ([www.bigblackhousedesign.co.uk](http://www.bigblackhousedesign.co.uk)) mirror the tall, burgundy *Sedum 'Jose Aubergine'* to their left.