

THE BEST IN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AND DECORATION

HOUSE & GARDEN

September
2015
£4.20

**MAKE
A SPLASH**
*Design ideas for
bathrooms
big and small*



**BESIDE THE
SEASIDE**

*Nostalgic recipes
inspired by
the British coast*

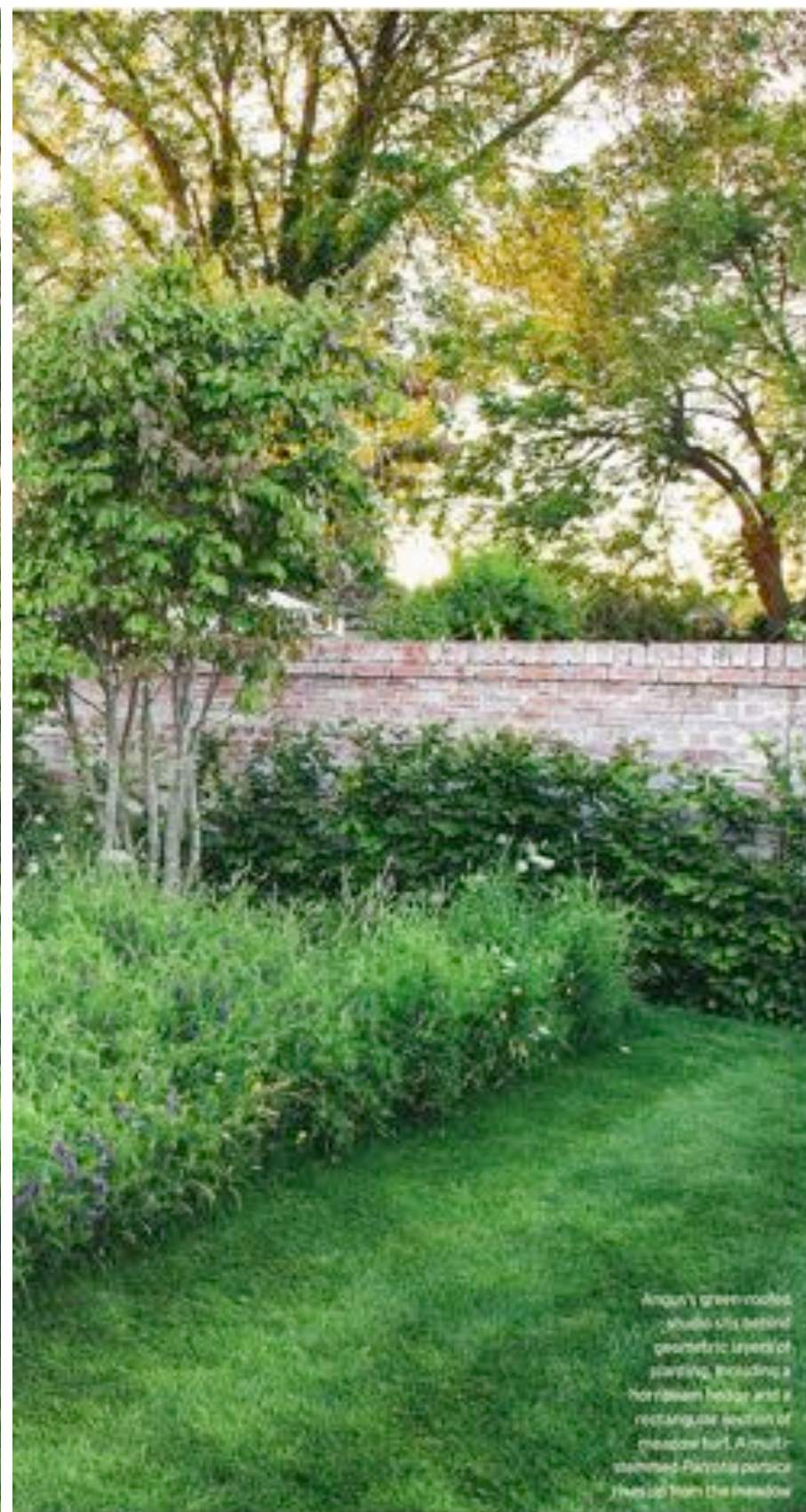
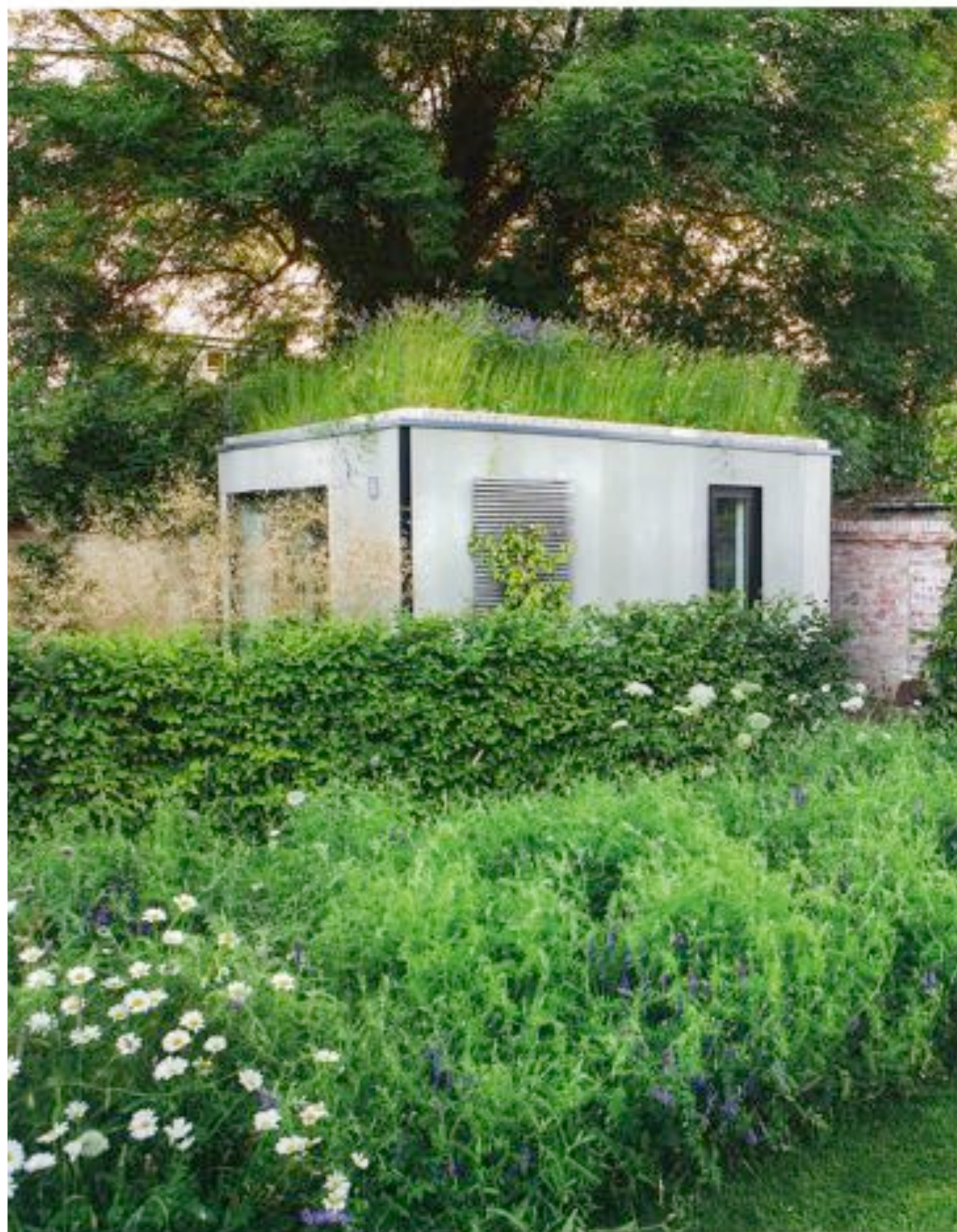
PLUS THE BEST
DESKS *and* BOLD
ZIGZAG PRINTS

SOPHISTICATED STYLE

CLEVER SOLUTIONS FOR A LONDON FLAT

Country living in a flower-filled Georgian house

ARNE MAYNARD'S MONMOUTHSHIRE GARDEN



Long division

At his Oxford home, landscape and garden designer Angus Thompson has divided a rectangular former timber yard into geometric sections, with a lawn, meadow and seating areas, to create a garden that feels perfectly lived in

TEXT CLARE FOSTER
PHOTOGRAPHS RACHEL WARNE

For a garden designer, there is no better experience than to design, build and plant your own garden from scratch. It was a logical step for Angus Thompson, as he had also overseen the building of his house on the site of a former timber yard in north Oxford, where he now lives with his wife and children. Once the timber-framed house was up, it left a rectangular garden space – 23 metres by 12 metres – for Angus to play with. Not only did he have to find a solution that suited himself, but he also had to keep the family happy.

'I love finding the simplest, purist response to a site,' says Angus, 'and this garden needed to be simple, because it's not a huge space. However, we've also got three kids and a dog to accommodate, so I had to take this into account.' Divided neatly into geometric sections, with a seating area near the house, a lawn, small meadow area and a studio office at the far end, the garden seems bigger than it really is. The eye is drawn to the horizontal lines that run across the space – the square of lawn inset with the rectangular section of meadow, the hornbeam hedge that separates the studio space from the rest of the garden – avoiding what Angus calls the 'runway effect' of a long,

Angus's green-roofed studio sits behind concrete-lined parking, providing a horizontal bridge and a rectangular section of meadow turf. A multi-stemmed hornbeam parades through from the meadow



'The interest in a garden's design comes from the juxtaposition of a rigorous structure with something a bit more badly behaved'



OPPOSITE
CLOCKWISE FROM
TOP LEFT The back
of the timber-framed
eco newbuild sports
another green roof.
Wine-coloured
monarda and
sanquisorba stand
out against a
rendered wall. The
bench was made from
recycled decking.
Stipa gigantea.
Angus's family
enjoying the garden.
THIS PAGE FROM
TOP A pot by Atelier
Verkant is used as
a water feature. A
Fernoxia persica
tree in the meadow

narrow garden. 'In larger gardens, I can afford to look at the interplay between curves and straight lines, but in smaller gardens a simple geometry is more appropriate – cleaner.'

In keeping with this uncluttered approach, both the hard landscaping materials and the planting palette are kept to a minimum. Compacted gravel was used at both ends of the garden to create seating areas, with a path made from tumbled York stone sets linking both ends. The benches were made from recycled timber decking that came from Angus's 2009 gold-medal-winning Chelsea garden, while the studio was constructed from cement particle board, an industrial material that had been used as a fireproof layer within the house. 'We were going to clad it in timber, but we had a budget to keep to,' says Angus. 'It's a bit brutalist but I love its colour – grey is so easy to plant against.' The battleship grey of the structure is softened by a hirsute green roof of meadow turf, the mirror image of which can be found on the back of the house.

To reflect the contemporary feel, the planting includes a deliberately limited collection of trees, perennials and grasses, plus a handful of self-seeders to keep things interesting. 'I think of the planting in layers, so the first things that go down on paper are the hedges and trees – the things that are integral to the structure of the design – and then different layers, from structural grasses to the dynamic self-seeders. But plants are never the starting point of my design – structure always comes first. The interest in a garden's design comes from the juxtaposition of a rigorous structure with something a bit more badly behaved.'

There isn't a huge amount that is badly behaved in Angus's garden – self-seeding crigeron, bronze fennel, *Eryngium giganteum* 'Silver Ghost' and *Dianthus cramoisi* are about as dangerous as you get – but Angus's experiments with meadow and green-roof planting threaten to shatter the order that the hornbeam hedges and beautiful multi-stemmed *Fernoxia persica* convey.

Above all, this is a garden that is well used. Meadow plants bounce back after the dog trars through chasing a cat and the few plants near the house – *calamagrostis*, *sanquisorba*, *monarda* and *echinacea* – are tough enough to withstand a frequent battering from a football. 'I really do think that a garden just designed to be seen from a window is half a garden,' says Angus. 'A garden is meant to be a space that human beings interact with. If you've got people in it, using it, it comes alive' □

Angus Thompson Design: 01865-552446;
angusthompsondesign.com