

INDIVIDUAL STYLE
FROM SMART HOMES TO THE NEW SEASON'S FABRICS

CITY GARDEN

Natural HIGH

Colourful seasonal planting, herbs and slow-growing evergreens have turned this glorious London roof terrace into an attractive sanctuary for butterflies and bees

WORDS VANESSA BERRIDGE PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD BLOOM



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To provide entertaining space, the custom-built barbeque, dining table, benches, and a pair of ottomans are paired with a floating bench.



A barbeque area is neatly tucked inside the conservatory, which serves as a mirror to the apartment below.

Although it was the rooftop garden that convinced Holly and Stephen Howard to buy the flat in which they now live, it was only after they moved in that they realised the garden needed a complete overhaul. "It seemed wonderful when we first saw it, but it was made in the Eighties so had lots of tiles and mirrors, and was rather overgrown," says Holly.

The apartment is on the fifth floor of a warehouse conversion adjacent to the Tower of London, and from the roof garden the couple is able to enjoy spectacular views towards the Shard, the River Thames and Canary Wharf. Inside, original brickwork and wooden floors are complemented by beautiful and colourful textiles, unique artworks and a contemporary kitchen, and Holly was keen that the garden, which is reached via a staircase through a conservatory, should be an extension of the interiors below. However, with the memory of her previous garden in Surrey fresh in her mind, she also wanted this new garden to have planting that would attract birds, bees and butterflies, and to provide flowers, foliage and herbs for eating.

With such a clear vision of what she wanted and eager to be closely involved in its creation, Holly turned to garden designer Katharina Niki, with whom she had worked on a building project in Mozambique through the charity Habitat for Humanity, and whose attention to detail had impressed her. Katharina likes her clients to be with her at every stage of the design process, so the partnership with Holly was a perfect fit. That said, transforming this space turned out to be a logistical nightmare. An existing glass structure and all the old planting and hard landscaping had to be taken off the roof, and new soil, plants and hard materials brought in. "We had



THIS PAGE The decked dining area opens out onto an 800-sq-ft terrace where the family likes to play pool. OPPOSITE PAGE As they take the terrace from a neglected area, the furniture is from Bramblecrest, 01295 707010. Gardenblossom.com



only just moved here," says Holly, "so I was keen not to upset the neighbours. We grouped the various removals to create as little disturbance as possible."

The 800-sq-ft garden is neatly divided into four sections: a built-in barbeque-kitchen, a private seating area, a dining area and a lawn; and to accommodate the weight restrictions incumbent upon roof-garden designs, there is a hardwood deck instead of stone. This also made it easier to raise the floor by an inch, so that the ships sailing by on the River Thames can be seen from sea level. The lawn, which is flanked by planters of box, sedum and geraniums, was a must. "Stephen likes to play bowls," laughs Holly.

The challenge of a roof terrace is to achieve the right balance between height and soft landscaping. Two olive trees provide strong verticals and have been deliberately planted small to give them a chance to establish properly in their exposed position. The sitting area is semi-enclosed by cedar cladding, up which climb three *Trachelogaster jasmionoides* planted in zinc containers, one of the few remaining features from the original garden. Planting also features long-flowering white hydrangeas (one of Holly's favourites) and ivy for cutting.

The dining area is framed by a floating bench seat and custom-made hardwood planters that are filled in spring with tulips, trailing rosemary and muscar. In summer, perennials such as the grass *Stipa tenuissima* for movement, various salixes, *Geum kinrossianum* 'Snowstorm' and *Verbena bonariensis* 'Lollipop' take over.

During evening entertaining, downlighting over the barbeque reveals a bold graphic-like mural. "This area is still a bit funky," says Holly, "and the mural reflects that." Uplights in containers beneath the jasmine and olive trees emphasise their height, while subtle lights play on the flooring beneath the benches. Holly is delighted with the result and was understandably proud that Katharina's design was shortlisted in the 2015 Society of Garden Designers Awards earlier this year. "It's a wonderful space day and night, a real garden on a rooftop." To see all the 2015 award-winning gardens, turn to page 106.



GARDEN GUIDE

Orientation South-west facing.
Soil Imported multi-purpose compost.
Special features Hardwood decking laid at right angles and an 800-sq-ft lawn divided by a pebble channel. Barbeque area with a mural and planters that include Olive nurseries (olive trees) and fragrant *Trachelogaster jasmionoides*.
Garden design Katharina Niki, 01534 699262, csgcollective.com/katharnaniki.

TOP LEFT Holly kept this area from the previous roof garden for its beautiful red foliage. It is one of two frost-resistant resin planters that were sourced by garden designer Katharina Niki from the New Covent Garden Market.
TOP RIGHT The seasonal planting includes purple Tulipa 'Grazeland' and white T. 'Silk Surplice' and white T. 'Angels Wish', with muscar and trailing *Trachelogaster jasmionoides*.
ABOVE LEFT The graffiti-style mural was painted by Lauren Mole, laurenmole.com, a friend of Holly's son. With its depiction of bees and decking, it echoes themes in the garden, while its geometric shapes evoke the surrounding city landscape.