

ASK THE designer

Each month we help sort out a reader's problem garden with clever advice from the best experts in the garden design world

Q Our overgrown mess of a garden is an awkward shape and on a slope. We'd love it to be a year-round low-maintenance space but where do we start? *Shelley Wilson, Yorkshire*

A IT SOUNDS LIKE A BIG ASK, doesn't it? With multiple problems like these, it may seem that the best option is to compromise. But that won't achieve your dream garden!

The owners of this tricky north west-facing London plot called in garden designer Katerina Kantalis (katerinakantalis.co.uk) to work some magic. For starters, the plot was a problematic triangular sloping space, measuring 7m wide nearest to the house narrowing to 3.5m wide at the end with a height difference of 40cm. And it had to accommodate the needs of a family of six including two adults and children ranging from five to early teens. "My clients wanted multiple spaces so that each member of the family could have their own spot," says Katerina.

*** Make the shape work**

"With the bamboo so overgrown, it was difficult to see what the plot actually looked like and what the potential was," says Katerina. The original garden had a narrow unusable patio, a large portion of patchy grass edged with shrubs and bamboo, which then ended with another small patio at the rear of the garden, which could hardly be seen. "However, the two existing patios along with the unique shape of the garden actually helped to dictate the design rather than hinder it," explains Katerina.

*** Repeat materials**

With the garden cleared, a design was agreed with strong angles that would distract from the odd-shaped boundaries, and a series of split-level terraces to deal with the slope. Both patios were enlarged and paved with hard-wearing and low-effort dark grey porcelain pavers, and connected with a zig-zag path of square pavers edged with slate chippings. "We tackled the slope by forming terraces to create four different zones," Katerina explains.

Each had a different end-use with a dining area close to the house, then a turf patch for the younger children, composite decking in the middle for a sunlounger or egg chair, and an entertaining patio with pergola at the rear.

"We put raised beds into both patios so we could create floating benches for seating," says Katerina. "And mixed within the main path are new planting beds to soften all the angles."

Some mature shrubs saved from the original garden went in here, including photinia, its rich red foliage adding colour and structure. The rest of the planting is architectural, evergreen and needs little looking after – phormium, *Euphorbia martini* and *Carex 'Ice Dance'*. The final touch is a focal-point water feature that can be seen from anywhere in the garden, along with lighting to highlight the zones for evening use, and to light the way between both patios.



KATERINA KANTALIS, GARDEN DESIGNER

“Analyse the space before you make any decisions. Strip it back, and decide what's the single most important thing you want to achieve”

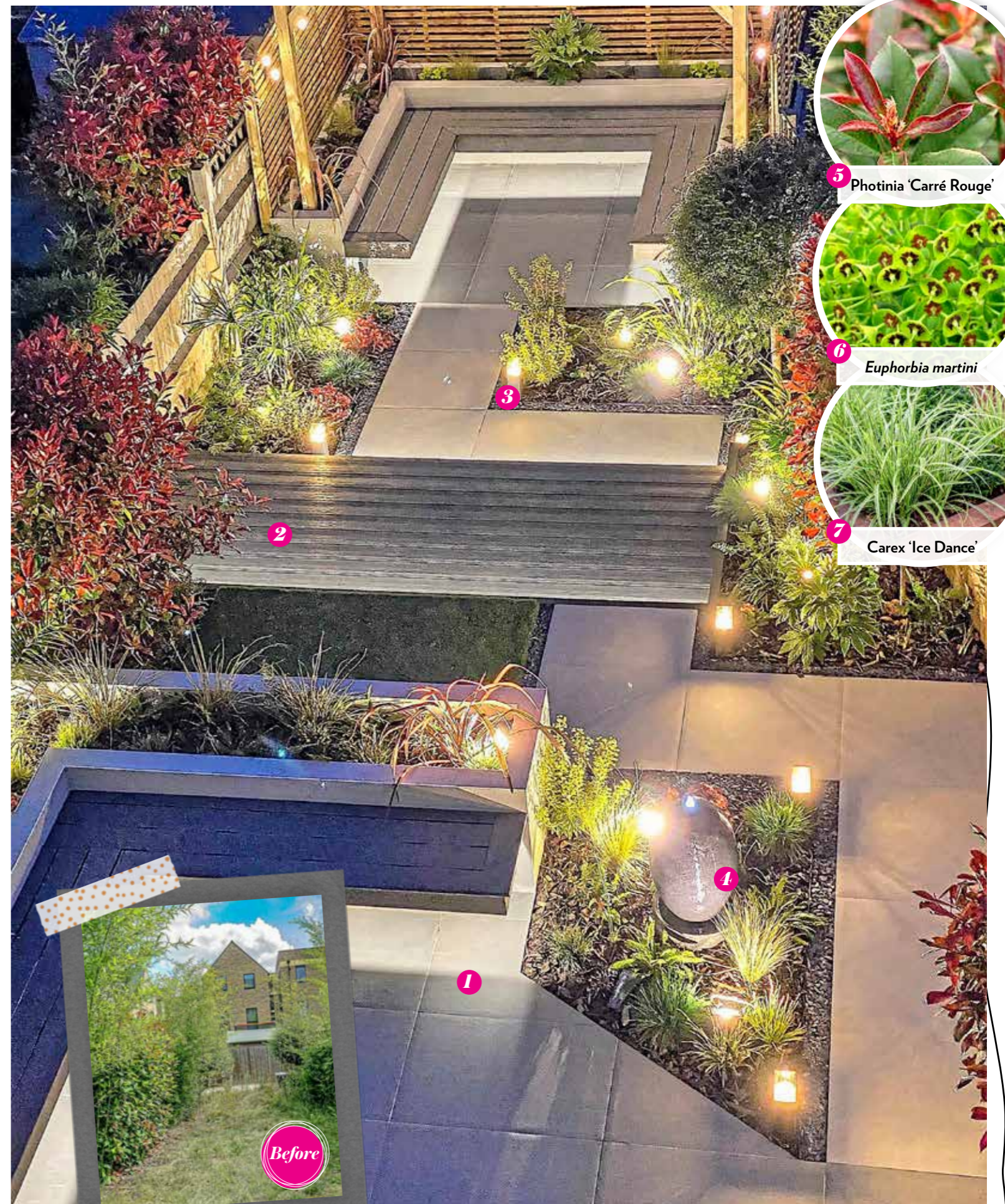


Get the look

- 1 PORCELAIN PAVERS** Grey single slab, from £11.90/900 x 600mm nustone.co.uk
- 2 COMPOSITE DECKING** Habitat+ Grey Composite Deck board L2.4m x W13.5cm, £22 diy.com
- 3 PATH LIGHTS** Amara Dark Grey & White Square Medium Post Light, £29.99 cginteriors.co.uk
- 4 WATER FEATURE** Elisa Fountain, £431.12 waterfeatures2go.co.uk
- 5 PHOTINIA 'CARRÉ ROUGE'**, £12.99/2L pot hedgesdirect.co.uk
- 6 EUPHORBIA MARTINI**, £19.99/1L pot dobies.co.uk
- 7 CAREX 'ICE DANCE'**, £5.99/9cm pot jparkers.co.uk

GOT A GARDEN PROBLEM?

Tell us all about it and send a picture of your plot to moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk. We'll select the best for expert design inspiration!



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