

Ramp up the Zen with a water feature

A Barnsbury garden makes the most of the soothing — and invigorating — power of running water

Alex Mitchell



THERE'S nothing like the sound of water to take the heat out of a city garden, and this summer we've craved it more than ever.

Even a simple wall fountain can make you feel cooler and reduce the temperature of the air around it.

London garden designer **Stuart Craine** works wonders with water, from pebble moats surrounding "floating" terraces to shiny water walls for roof gardens. He loves the extra dimension water brings. "It's nice as a focal point and you get beautiful reflections. Clients love it. It's incredibly relaxing. In London the sound of running water can reduce the sound of traffic and other distractions."

In a garden in Barnsbury, Craine installed a magnificent stone rill running all the way down one side, plus a sunken plunge whirlpool in a more private area near the house. One of his tricks is to surround water with planting that you associate with waterside habitats, adding to the feeling of lushness. Here, he used large-leaved Rodgersia, persicaria and arching Japanese forest grass, keeping the palette green apart from a large acer palmatum tree near the plunge pool for amazing autumn colour.

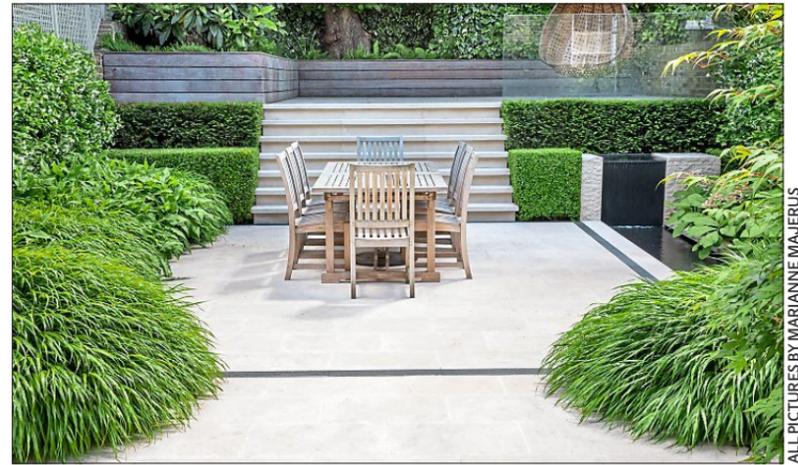
Most of us don't need water we can get into, just some that we can hear and maybe trail a hand in. Craine's advice is to be practical: "Avoid placing it underneath trees where foliage can fall into it." Go for materials in keeping with the style of your garden and house. He suggests stainless steel has been "overdone" and blends in less well with most London properties than more natural



Plunge in: amid acer and ferns, the whirlpool spa sits at the house end of the garden

materials such as bronze, copper or slate. In small spaces such as courtyards, basements or balconies, a simple, wall-mounted, self-contained fountain pouring water into a half bowl can be incredibly restful. Since the water will recirculate there is no need to plumb it into the mains.

Craine has reused stone ornaments in this way in a courtyard garden and recommends looking in reclamation yards for characterful pieces. Or try stone experts **Haddonstone** (haddonstone.com) whose simple cast stone Green Man weighs only 5kg, so it's easy to attach to a wall.



Contemporary stream: above and left, a rill runs beside the patio flanked by Japanese forest grass and Rodgersia, with star jasmine scrambling over the wall



With mains pump and an Arcadian half bowl, it's under £600.

For an even lighter set-up, designer **Claire Mee** (clairemee.co.uk) used the fibreglass Great Dolphin Bowl from **Capital Garden Products** (£501, capital-garden.com; pump not included) in the terracotta finish in a

London garden. "If you grow climbers like trachelospermum or ivy around it, it looks quite natural," she says. "As with any water feature, in hot weather don't forget to top up your reservoir or you might blow your pump out."

With battery- or solar-powered wall fountain sets you don't even need an outside plug. Simply hang like a picture, fill with water and listen to the soothing sound. The Small Lion Head Wall Fountain by **Ambienté** (primrose.co.uk, £49.99) in polyresin with a rust finish won't fool anyone close up, but in a small courtyard at night, with low lighting surrounded by planting, who's going to notice?

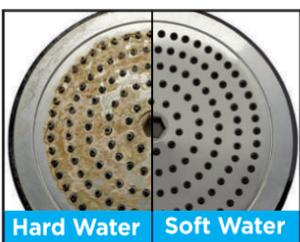
If you require more than just the sound of water to cool the city heat, the Aquart Lux Outdoor Garden Shower (madeindesign.co.uk, £195), with copper piping and a cement base, is freestanding and connects straight to your garden hose.

● **Commission Stuart Craine:** stuartcraine.com

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