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GARDEN OF BLISS

Earth Designs, based in Leigh-on-Sea, has created a blissful sanctuary for a family who wanted a wildlife-friendly outside space to escape and relax

WORDS BY **KATY PEARSON**

Hidden behind a family home in Rayleigh lies a blissful sanctuary away from the hustle and bustle of life. It is a sensory garden designed for learning, playing as a family, or relaxing on your own. With quiet corners, sensuous shapes and thriving wildlife to explore and enjoy at your own pace.

So how do you create one? Well, you can select particular plants for their tactile leaves or colourful, aromatic flowers. And encouraging wildlife can bring wonderful sounds to the garden and create opportunities for learning. But whether it's designed with one or all these requirements in mind

depends who's using it and what their individual needs may be.

This Essex family wanted an outside space in which to escape, relax, learn and grow with their two swing-loving children. It needed to be wildlife friendly and sensory orientated.

With room for alfresco dining, outdoor learning, some home-grown produce - and (of course) a swing or two. The old garden was a series of isolated and lacklustre spaces. It comprised a small garden at the front, a side area and square plot to the rear with a shed and well-established tree. The challenge for Leigh-on-Sea-based Earth Designs was to unite the garden and deliver the sensory experience the family needed, without compromising on style.

Garden designer Katrina Kieffer-Wells found the answer in natural patterns and the inviting curves of Art Nouveau design. She used repeating swirling shapes to connect and harmonise the space. "Design elements can be practical and pleasurable" says Kat.

"The visual continuity of repeating patterns isn't just pleasing to the eye, it also calms the senses."

Curvaceous flower beds soften the square edges of the back garden. And a new resin pathway links the spaces, sweeping round the house and through an archway, to the summerhouse and spiral patio at the rear. In contrast to the gentle curves, wildflower beds burst with life. Abundant with colour, sounds and textures.



“Encouraging wildlife and growing your own produce is a great way to learn about the environment, weather and biology,” adds Kat.

“Here, raised beds constructed with railway sleepers nurture a menu of interesting new smells and tastes to explore. Tall flowering perennials, berry and fruit trees bring bees, birds and butterflies to the garden. A wood store adds texture and a healthy insect population. And a small, round pond continues the circular theme.”

Not just a home for wildlife, the garden provides several ideal habitats for the family to eat, relax and chill out too.

The patio is just right for enjoying a private family meal at the bistro-style table and chairs. And nestled underneath the tree canopy at the end of the garden, is the much-desired swing seat.

Earth Designs are members of the British Association of Landscape Industries and Association of Professional Landscapers.

If you are considering a sensory garden or any kind of garden makeover, contact Katrina Kieffer-Wells, MSGD and her team at info@earthdesigns.co.uk to arrange a consultation. 1

earthdesigns.co.uk

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