

ULTIMATE Gardens

London's finest homes deserve outdoor entertaining spaces that are as inventive as they are beautiful, writes Anne Cuthbertson



GARDEN TOYS
Clockwise from opposite: The Courtyard garden at Twenty Grosvenor, designed by Randle Siddeley; kitchen by Kalamazoo; parasol by East London Parasol Company; Siddeley's Floating Fantasia garden; the Ooni pizza oven; wood-fired pizza at home

Something rather dramatic has occurred in London gardens in recent years. Where once we settled for a lawn of our own, well-tended flowerbeds, a couple of fruit trees and a patio with chairs to enjoy an evening drink, 21st century aspirations and a little Chelsea Show Garden magic have brought a new dynamic to outdoor spaces.

There is nothing the London garden cannot accommodate, it would seem. Think built-in kitchens and bars, fireplaces and firepits, sunken seating and designer all-weather sofas, pizza ovens and showpiece barbecue grills. Low maintenance gardens leave owners more time for entertaining and faking it is more than acceptable, with 'preserved trees' (artificial) and Easigrass.

Award-winning landscape architect Randle Siddeley has installed many such 'ultimate gardens', the names of which include Serenity in the City, Floating Fantasia, Stairway to the Stars and An Urban Retreat, ranging in location from Hampstead to Holland Park, Kensington to Fincham's Twenty Grosvenor Square in Mayfair. "I hate to repeat anything," says Siddeley, "no client is ever the same. Clients are guided by their lifestyle."

COOKING

Outdoor dining is a high priority and has the capacity to be a real game-changer, according to Siddeley. "The important thing about a barbecue is that you can barbecue and entertain at the same time without having to turn your back on your



guests." A barbecue that's as attractive as possible is key, as well as being great to cook on. "The Big Green Egg does one hell of a barbecue," says Siddeley, "and one hell of a roast" (biggreenegg.co.uk). The stainless steel top of most barbecues spoils its appearance when not in use. At a property in Wentworth, Surrey, Siddeley installed a full outdoor kitchen – he likes to use Gaze Burvill (gazeburvill.com) – with a teppanyaki grill, two barbecues and a pizza oven by the American brand Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet (available in the UK through Cedar Nurseries, kitcheninthegarden.co.uk).

For standalone options, the Florence-based luxury kitchen company, Officine Gullo, this year brings its exceptional design and burnished bronze finishes to the outdoors with its brand new barbecue range (from £10,680, officinegullo.com). For something a little more rustic, Morsos's deluxe forno set is a grill and pizza oven (you can even smoke fish in it) in cast iron on wheels (£2,040, morsoc.com). While for something smaller and more portable, the Ooni Pro Large multi-fuel pizza oven reaches 500C in a mere matter of 20 minutes (£499, uk.ooni.com). Don't forget to keep your drinks chilled >>

SHOW GARDEN
Clockwise from left:
 Office Gullo
 barbecue; Blair light in
 brass by Christopher
 Wray, £425; fire pit
 from 1stDibs, £39,402;
 screen by Screen with
 Envy; Linley Collection
 furniture at Summit



too, with a Wolf Outdoors under-counter stainless steel outdoor refrigerator (subzero-wolf.co.uk).

FIREPLACES AND FIREPITS

We live in a cool country but can take inspiration from even colder climates. Siddeley has worked on a project in the Alps which had a semi-sunken amphitheatre with heated seats. Fireplaces set into outdoor walls – especially living walls of foliage up to 5m high – are growing in popularity in the UK. For smaller budgets there is a huge range of firepits, some with glass sides for safety for a young family. There are some spectacular wood burning fire pits with seating by Ercole AK47 design (£5,963, 1stdibs.co.uk).

SEATING AND FURNISHINGS

There is an important question to ask when choosing outdoor garden furniture: "What does it look like in winter?" "It mustn't be a blot on the landscape," says Siddeley. "And you should be able to sit out on it without cushions." We've come a long way from timber mahogany chairs. Siddeley's go-to brand is Summit, which originally designed yacht furniture. Its Linley Collection is a collaboration with his friend David Linley and is "one of the most comfortable ranges". For metal furniture he likes the Heveningham Collection (heveningham.co.uk) and for sofas, Indian Ocean (indian-ocean.co.uk). When designing a true 'outdoor room', bespoke furniture gives a garden something special. In a complete redesign of a Knightsbridge penthouse terrace by Kitesgrove, the interior design house chose furniture inspired by Vladimir Kagan designs, and chairs covered in Perennials outdoor fabric (perennialsfabrics.com).

You can afford to go more exotic with your soft furnishings and parasols, for those rare hot sunny days. The East London parasol company offers decadent designs handmade in India, with tassels, embroidery and sari silks, in 2m and 3m sizes, as well as cushions and tablecloths (eastlondonparasols.com). An ornate screen can neatly divide off a lounging area, or disguise eyesores such as fencing. Screen with Envy has panels of 6ft by 3ft in wood composite designs (from £85 a panel, screenwithenvy.co.uk).

LIGHTING

Lighting your outdoor theatre will transform your space. Hazel Park,

