

DON'T MOVE, IMPROVE



FOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS THAT WILL ADD VALUE

WORDS JUDITH WILSON
PHOTOGRAPHS JOANNA HENDERSON

THE CREDIT CRUNCH MEANS IT'S TIME TO STAY PUT AND GET CREATIVE. WE GAVE THREE DESIGN EXPERTS A £10,000 BUDGET

£10K
BUYS YOU

A garden with wow factor



THE EXPERT: Annabelle Wilding, 41, has been running her Twickenham-based garden design company, Earthwork Garden Sanctuary Design, for

five years. She believes that creating a personal garden is the key to achieving a clever transformation.

THE BRIEF: Annabelle was commissioned to design a family-friendly, but cost-effective, garden for Sally and Nick Walmsley and their baby son, Oscar. The task was to transform an ordinary suburban patch, with a stone patio and lawn, into a zoned garden with space for alfresco meals, a soft play area for Oscar and some shade. 'Sally didn't enjoy sitting in the garden, but wasn't sure how to change it,' says Wilding.

'I was able to address the practicalities, such as where to entertain, and how to create an activity area for children.' While £10,000 is a modest budget, Wilding has achieved an incredible transformation. 'It's an investment to commission a garden designer, but doing so brings fresh eyes to a project,' she says.

● **Add height**

'Adding height to a garden transforms the space, by creating a vertical sightline, making the garden seem larger and more interesting,' says Wilding. 'I designed a simple pergola, made from tannalised softwood. Off-the-peg pergolas or seating arbours can be expensive, so we got the contractor to hand-build one, which saved around £700. To give Sally shade, I planted it with a passion flower, called *passiflora caerulea*, which will trail prettily in time.'

● **Buy plants wholesale**

'With a minimum spend of £150, it's possible to buy from a plant wholesaler – cheaper than going to a garden centre. Get your garden designer to create a plant list, or do your own. I recommend *Perfect Plant*, *Perfect Place* by Roy Lancaster (Dorling Kindersley, £19.99). Work out if there are existing plants that you can keep. Sally retained her pink roses – this dictated a colour scheme of silver, purple, pink and green. I've chosen perennial and evergreen plants, to give year-round coverage. Pick plants with an Award Of Garden Merit, from the RHS, as they are solid performers. Sally saved around £700 on labour costs by doing all the planting herself.'

● **Use timber decking**

'Decking looks very smart and is great for an entertaining area. If possible,

choose a hardwood as, unlike softwood, it doesn't have to be treated every year. We used red balau, an attractive hardwood. Decking is particularly cost-effective, as it can be laid straight on top of an existing surface, so here there was no need to dig up the stone patio, with all the associated construction costs.'

● **Use a reliable garden contractor**
'A good garden contractor will be sensitive to plants. We used Ben West at Landscaping Solutions, who is excellent. It wasn't until he cleared plants at the bottom of the garden that Sally realised she had a beautiful fig tree, which she decided to keep. We also retained a pretty apple tree as a feature. Quality workmanship and

good materials ensure the garden will last.'

● **Keep it simple**
'Relatively minor changes, such as adding a new lawn, make a huge difference in a town garden. Avoid lighting, water features and new walls, as these will all bump up the cost. In terms of transformation, the most important space to get right is the area

SHOPPING LIST

- ▶ FEE FOR GARDEN DESIGNER: **£1,100**
- ▶ CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS: **£6,075**
- ▶ WOODEN PERGOLA: **£300**
- ▶ HANDMADE TRELLIS PANELS: **£1,825**
- ▶ NEW LAWN: **£300**
- ▶ PLANTS: **£300**
- TOTAL SPEND: £9,900**

immediately outside the house, as it is your outdoor room. A good one will add value to your home.'

● **Use boundaries to conceal**
'It's not always possible to remove ugly features from a garden. Sally had an unattractive water tank protruding into her space, from next door. We have used smart trellis panels to conceal the tank, and added wood chips to create a soft play area at the end of the garden. The contractor hand-made the trellis, which saved £1,000 on off-the-peg pieces.'

Annabelle Wilding, Earthwork Garden Sanctuary Design, 07748 987 298; earthworkdesign.co.uk. Landscaping Solutions, 020 8241 2402; landscapingsolutionsltd.co.uk



OPPOSITE PAGE: Sally and Oscar enjoy their new garden. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: The pergola; decking in red balau wood; purple and pink plants brighten up the space; different zones in the garden; a play area for Oscar

