

# “Vibrant bursts of colour progress round the garden”



Jilayne's small garden is beautiful and family friendly

## Garden visit

Autumn is a rich and long-lasting spectacle in Jilayne Rickards' small back garden. **Annie Gatti** discovers how she's fired up this compact space with vibrant flair. Photos by Marianne Majerus

**For gardeners with room for** majestic trees and generous borders of grasses and late-flowering perennials, it's relatively easy to create autumn drama. For the owners of small gardens where every plant has to earn its keep, however, it's tricky to achieve more than one or two bursts of autumnal colour.

So the 16m x 5.5m back garden of designer Jilayne Rickards and her partner Simon, where autumn is staged with theatrical flair, is a bravura performance. For two months of the year they look out from the long kitchen table in their north London family home onto what Jilayne calls their 'magic show' of yellows, pinks, oranges and reds, most of which are provided by foliage and seedheads.

"Some people like their autumn display in one quick blaze, but I like protracted colour," explains Jilayne. "I have vibrant bursts of colour that progress round the garden, starting with acers and ending with cotinus."

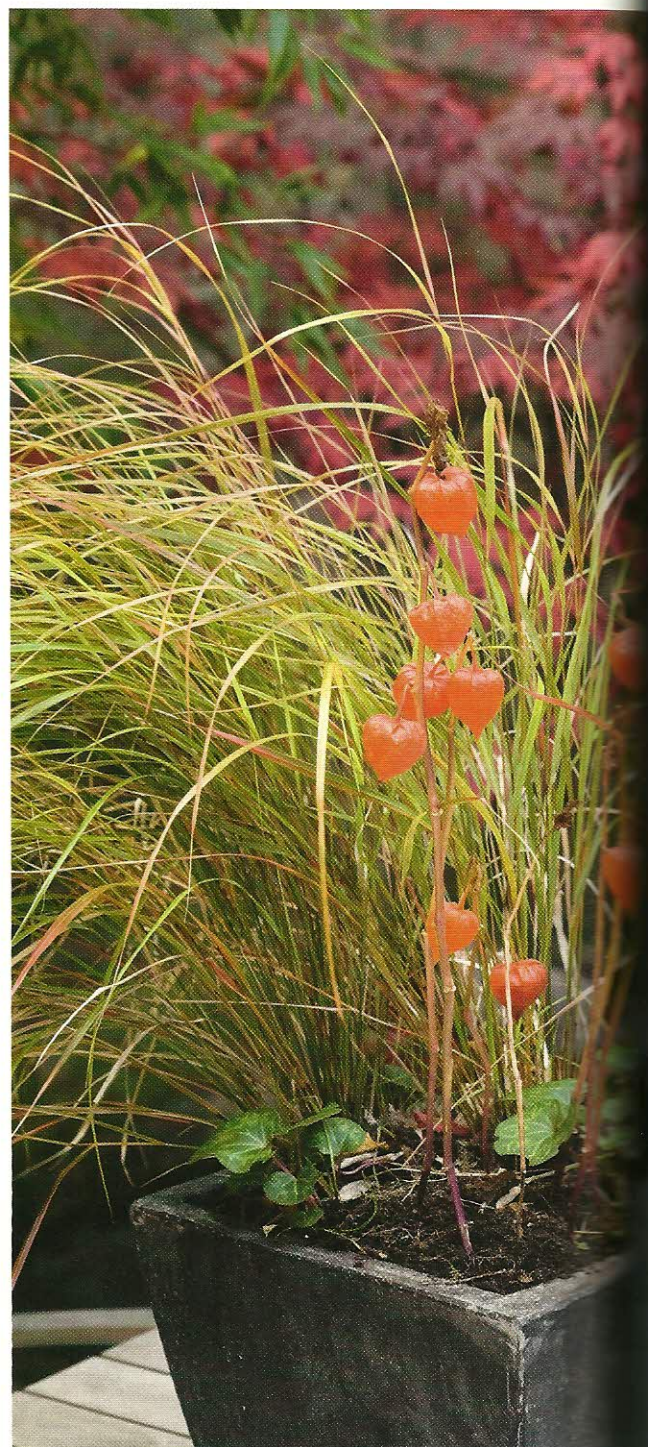
### Awash with colour

The display starts with splashes of flaming red from two acers in dark containers on the terrace, along with brilliant orange foliage and cone-shaped crimson fruits of a sumach tree in the right-hand border. Sumachs, Jilayne says, make excellent trees for small gardens, as long as you control their suckers and check with your neighbours that they don't mind any

overhanging branches. Another acer, in a raised bed on the opposite side, blazes fiery scarlet while seedheads of tawny pheasant tail grass gradually turn from dusky pink to rich orange. In the left-hand border sedums create pools of pink, while soft-pink Japanese anemones are offset by the buff-coloured seedheads of *Miscanthus sinensis*.

As autumn progresses, a wave of yellow ripples slowly across the far end of the garden, created by the leaves of a chocolate vine, *Akebia quinata*, growing on an arch, and a line of *Cornus alba* 'Elegantissima' that screens off a seating area. On the side fence an evergreen *Trachelospermum jasminoides* is tinged with red, while on the end wall Chinese Virginia creeper, *Parthenocissus henryana*, turns scarlet. Finally, two smoke bushes, *Cotinus coggygia* 'Royal Purple', in the left-hand border, light up, rounding off the show.

Creating an inspiring view from the house was also a priority when Jilayne sat down to design the garden seven years ago. She had trained as a garden designer, opting for a career change with the birth of her third child, Holly, and her own back yard was her first professional project. Having grown up in Cornwall, Jilayne had a love of the colours and patterns found in nature. "I really connect with plant shapes, the way the salt wind in Cornwall creates mis-shapes and the way the sea forms watermarks in



A pot of Chinese lanterns and grasses makes a table centrepiece

