

# Using height and structure

The plants or features that give height and structure to a scheme greatly enhance the way a garden is perceived and used. This is especially true of a straight-sided, horizontal plot, where introducing different heights will create movement and

dynamism. There are certain principles to bear in mind, such as the rules of perspective, and it is useful to remember that the closer you are to a structure, the larger it will appear. Use hard landscaping and planting to create the effects you want.

## HEIGHT LEVELS

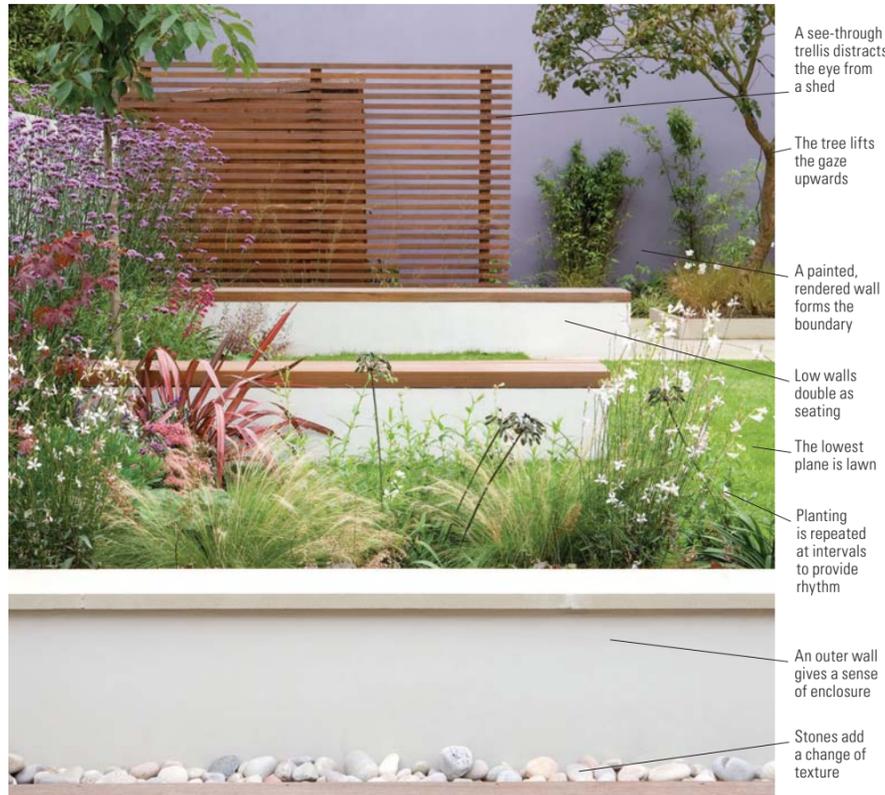
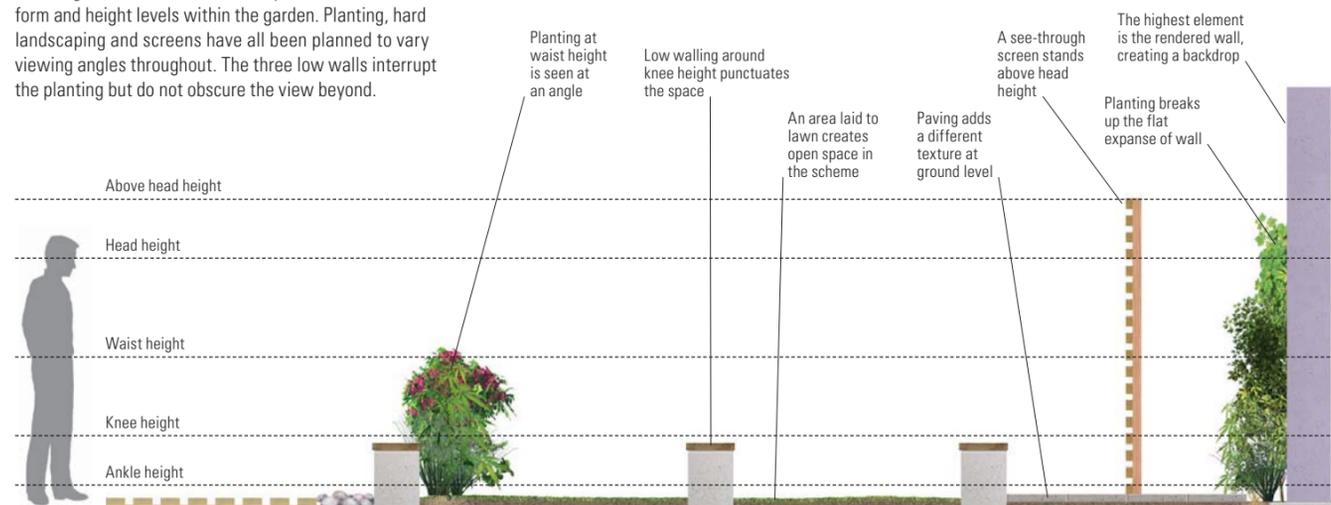
It is practical to think about height levels in terms of how they relate to the adult human body, which affects how they are viewed and experienced. Anything below knee height is viewed from above. Waist-high elements are seen at an angle and form a screen, partly blocking views to anything immediately behind them. At shoulder and head height, dense or opaque elements (such as closely planted tall shrubs, hedging or high screens) will completely block a view. Structures above head height, for example a tree canopy, can create a sense of seclusion as the sky and nearby buildings are obscured. Hard landscaping provides fixed elements but all further interest comes from planting. Indeed, combining plants of different heights is one of the key aspects of a successful garden. Few built elements can compete with a mature tree for interest and drama.

### > VARYING HEIGHTS

This multi-level design shows the clever relationship between the fixed height of the parallel low walls, and the natural variations achieved with perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees.

### ∨ HEIGHT LEVELS EXPLAINED

This diagram shows the relationship between the human form and height levels within the garden. Planting, hard landscaping and screens have all been planned to vary viewing angles throughout. The three low walls interrupt the planting but do not obscure the view beyond.



### ^ CONTRASTS OF HEIGHT

The stature of these elegant olive trees is given greater emphasis by the low planting below.

### > SHIELDING NEIGHBOURS

A combination of trees and shrubs behind trellis screens provides partial screening and privacy from neighbours. The painted frame adds height and structure to what would otherwise feel like a small space.

## INTRODUCING HEIGHT

A range of height levels gives variety and interest to a garden, whatever its scale. Elements that create instant height include barriers (walls, fences, screens, or trellis), overhead structures (pergolas, arbours, or canopies), and play equipment, such as a child's swing. Planting options are varied and include trees, many shrubs, bamboos, climbers, hedges, and perennials for seasonal variation. Bear in mind that young trees and shrubs need not be expensive, but take time to gain height. Built structures cost more, but are quickly realised and make permanent features.



## USING PERSPECTIVE

There are two important principles to consider when using perspective (the way in which objects appear to the eye). The first is that parallel lines in the viewer's sight appear to converge at a point in the distance, known as the "vanishing point". The second is that objects nearer to the viewer appear larger than those further away. A large tree or work

of art, for example, may look too dominant placed in the foreground, but in proportion sited farther away. By carefully positioning elements of different heights in the garden, the rules of perspective can be exploited. It is even possible to produce slight optical illusions, for example, by repeating motifs at intervals to make a garden look longer.



The sculpture at the far end makes an appealing focal point in the distance. Repetition of this broad, shallow curve makes the garden seem longer and wider than it actually is.

### TRICKING THE EYE

The use and orientation of parallel lines, and the repetition of shapes, draw the eye forward to the sculpture, creating a sense of depth.

## TEMPORARY SCREENS

While pergolas and other built structures provide height and solid overhead planes, they need support and can fill small gardens with posts. If uprights would be a problem in your garden, consider suspending temporary canopy screens to create shade and make the garden feel more intimate. Sail-like screens are a good solution and they can be taken down when not required. They need to be attached securely, but can be an excellent way of creating privacy in a small garden.



### NAUTICAL SCREEN

A lightweight and elegant sail canopy provides shade, does not clutter the garden with posts, and conveys a feeling of intimacy to small urban gardens.

## TRANSPARENT SCREENS

Trellis, glass, and other transparent and semi-transparent screens help to separate garden spaces without diminishing light. They are useful in smaller plots, where they allow visual connections to be made, while breaking up the space into different areas, and adding a change of mood. Transparent screens also make attractive features in their own right.



### VERSATILE TRELLIS

The open latticework of trellis associates well with plants and climbers and may be left open or screened with evergreens.

### GLASS PANELS

This patterned glass panel allows light through but slightly obscures the visual connection to the next area of the garden.