

ASK THE designer

Each month we help sort out a reader's problem garden with clever advice from the best experts in the garden design world

Q Our plot isn't very big but we need space to put a lawnmower and bikes. How can we incorporate plenty of storage without it taking over the garden? *Sue Reed, Devon*

A EVERY GARDEN NEEDS SOME storage but when it comes to a small plot, a shed can easily dominate the space. The trick is to camouflage the storage while drawing the eye to something far more gorgeous, so you can squeeze loads in but still keep the garden looking sleek and spacious. This Southampton garden was cleverly transformed from useless to useful by garden designer Neil Jones (neiljonesdesign.com). "My clients, a working couple with two young children, were keen to tackle their storage problems as they had a ramshackle shed in the main garden and small sheds and chests down the side of the house," explains Neil. "The bikes are used daily for school and commuting so it was important they could be easily accessed as well as securely stored."

In addition to storage space, there was also a requirement to include a lawn and an area for entertaining that would seat 6-8 people and have a cooking station – which is a lot to fit into a garden that measures just L12 x W6.5m!

*** Hidden storage**

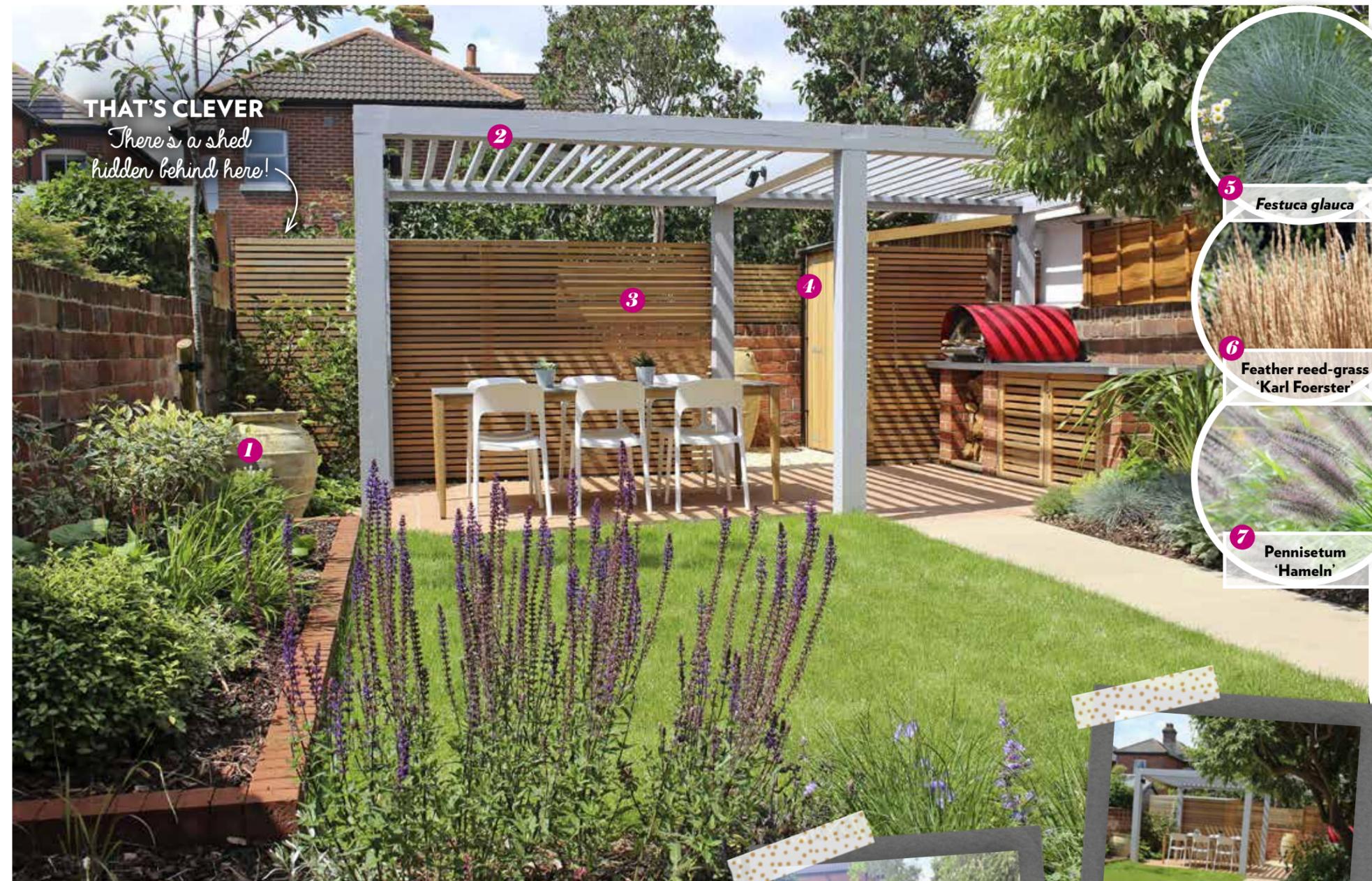
To solve the storage problem, a false wall was created near the end of the plot to house a new shed, a separate cycle shed and a small

unit for composting. "The area is screened off from the rest of the garden with slatted timber screens that form the backdrop to the pergola," says Neil. "An opening in the screen frames a large terracotta urn beyond, creating the illusion of the garden extending and appearing larger than it is. I used the same timber for the screens, storage sheds and cupboard doors in the outdoor kitchen so as not to have too many materials and ensure a coordinated and holistic approach in a small space. Western red cedar is hard-wearing, doesn't require treating and presents a beautiful blend of warm tones and a sweet aroma in warm weather."

*** Clever colour**

A bold timber pergola over the dining area was carefully designed to provide the focal feature of the small space, further distracting from the storage beyond. "The clean lines of the frame with a slatted roof were painted a pale grey to tone with the restricted pallet of just three colours and materials that I'd chosen," explains Neil. "This approach was taken so as not to over-complicate the design and provide a considered, consistent look."

The red oven in the outdoor kitchen provides the perfect accent colour.



THAT'S CLEVER

There's a shed hidden behind here!



5 **Festuca glauca**

6 **Feather reed-grass 'Karl Foerster'**

7 **Pennisetum 'Hameln'**

*** Sunny planting**

Neil wanted to evoke a feeling of relaxed outdoor living with this garden design and took inspiration for the planting scheme from Mediterranean walled gardens where al fresco dining and entertaining is at the heart of the space. "The planting reflects the low-maintenance aspect of Med-style that my clients wanted," says Neil. "I focused on sensory plants that are aromatic and would suit the sunny aspect of the garden."

Thyme, lavender and sage were included in the narrow beds, interspersed with ornamental grasses festuca, feather reed and pennisetum. Star jasmine will, in time, spread across the slatted fencing, further disguising the shed, and cloak the roof of the pergola, providing a wonderful heady scent in the evening.

Get the look

- 1 **STATEMENT URN** Terracotta Athenian Planter H100cm, £279.99 primrose.co.uk
- 2 **MODERN WOODEN PERGOLA** The Cube Garden Solid Wood Pergola, H2.1 x W2.5 x D2.5m, £1,159.99 wayfair.co.uk
- 3 **WESTERN RED CEDAR SLATS** Canadian Western Red Cedar SertiWOOD Battens Screen Slats Fencing, £230/21 homebase.co.uk
- 4 **BIKE SHED** Forest Garden Overlap Pressure Treated 6ft x 3ft Pent Shed, £319.99 simplylogcabins.co.uk
- 5 **FESTUCA GLAUCA** Height 30cm Spread 25cm, £3.99/7cm pot jparkers.co.uk
- 6 **FEATHER REED-GRASS** Height 1.8m Spread 60cm, £7.99/9cm pot crocus.co.uk
- 7 **PENNISETUM** Height 1m Spread 120cm, £10.99/9cm pot thompson-morgan.com



Before

Dated and overgrown, the garden was not being used to its full potential



After

Smart design tricks and savvy storage give the illusion of more space

GOT A GARDEN PROBLEM?

Tell us all about it and send a picture of your plot to moderngardens@bauermedia.co.uk. We'll select the best for expert design inspiration!



NEIL JONES, GARDEN DESIGNER

“Clever storage solutions can fit into a garden of any size. As well as fake walls to hide sheds, think about built-in seating with storage below, as well as tables and worktops with integral cupboards”