



In at the deep end

Fitting a swimming pool into a triangular plot, with a brief to lose all the angles, presented garden designer Bart Hoes with a challenge

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At the southern tip of the Zuid-Kennemerland National Park, in the Netherlands, the villas of Aerdenhout nestle comfortably in their leafy surroundings. They are close enough to Amsterdam for an easy commute, yet distant enough for peace and tranquillity, with the beach a mere bike ride away. No wonder these properties, mostly built in the 1920s and 1930s, sell at a premium, and Aerdenhout consistently ranks as the wealthiest village in the Netherlands.

When the architect-owner of one of those villas moved in some 15 years ago, it took a while before he turned his attention to the awkward area at the east end of his garden that had been neglected for decades. A *Taxus baccata* hedge screened it off nicely from the traditional set-up of lawn, borders, shrubs and trees around the house, so the 'jungle' beyond had been easy to disregard.

Imagining the triangular plot as a swimming pool garden was less easy, but that was exactly what the owner asked garden designer Bart Hoes to do, in 2007. "We had to work with the plot's odd outline, plus ▷

Left *Buxus sempervirens*, cloud-pruned to echo the pool's curves, and dotted with multi-stemmed *Platanus x hispanica*, creates a soft-edged feel in this awkward, triangular plot. Nestled in among the trees is a sculpture by Jan Jacobs Mulder called *Zuidenwind*, which translates as southerly wind.

Above The outdoor shower is another sculpture, *Water en vuur* (water and fire), by Jan Jacobs Mulder.



Facing page

Left To the rear of the pool, soft clumps of *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus' contrast with the structure of the cloud-pruned box and create a naturalistic feel to the planting.

Right A path made from the same hardwood decking that surrounds the pool leads through a shady avenue of *Platanus x hispanica*.

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Left Clumps of the grass *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus' and the shrub *Hydrangea aspera* 'Macrophylla' help shield a seating area from the pool.

Below left An opening in a tall *Taxus baccata* hedge forms a magical entrance to the pool area, while the winding pathway through plane trees adds to this air of mystery. In this predominantly green garden *Persicaria amplexicaulis* adds rich spots of colour.

Below right Bart has given the sides of the pool a grey finish to deepen the colour of the water, and to link the pool to the surrounding hard-wood decking.

▷ zoning restrictions that state that you cannot build within five metres of the boundary," says Bart. The health-conscious owner wanted as much pool length as possible as he planned on actually using it for swimming laps. Add to that the fact that Bart wanted to keep as many of the mature trees as possible, and the design he came up with was an organically shaped pool, whose curvy lines are echoed in its steps and the surrounding balau decking.

The same durable hardwood is used for a pathway starting at a narrow passage in the yew hedge and ending up at the very tip of the

triangle. It leads through a newly planted cluster of nine multi-stemmed *Platanus x hispanica*, with clouds of *Buxus sempervirens* separating the path from the pool to its left, and *Hydrangea aspera* 'Macrophylla' and gravel leading up to the boundary to its right.

Bart has used this same gravel, known in the Netherlands as flagcorn, for a beech-screened seating area, where the owner plans to build a folly. "Flagcorn looks beautiful, with its shades of grey matching the weathered balau," says Bart. "And because the pebbles are flat and rounded, walking on them barefoot is no problem."

Between the gravel area and the pool decking, *Miscanthus sinensis* adds to the overall feeling of green, which ensures a magical, secret-garden effect throughout the year. But look for it and you will see colour, from pelargoniums, verbena, anemones, *Koeleruteria paniculata* and *Heuchera micrantha* in the summer, to the glorious golden leaves of an old chestnut in the autumn. Every line, every plant and every tree in this garden flows, bends, and curves – everything a triangle does not. If you ever need a square peg fitted into a round hole, surely Bart Hoes is your man. □

Bart Hoes's five key points for designing a pool garden

1 Materials Using concrete when building a pool gives you an unlimited freedom of design. For the area around the pool, Bart recommends using splinter-free decking, which can be cut into any shape and it does not get as hot underfoot as tiles.

2 Colour A grey finish on the pool's inside provides a much more coherent and natural look in a verdant garden than the standard blue. The darker you go, the more of a 'pond' rather than a 'pool' effect you get.

3 Planting The old adage of 'no deciduous trees around a pool' no longer applies, thanks to technological innovations, such as skimmers and robot vacuums, that get rid of leaves and debris. By bringing planting up to the pool's edge, you can alter even further the visual impact of the pool's shape.

4 Shape Although your plot may dictate the pool's area, it does not necessarily dictate its shape. Nowhere in this garden do you feel you are on a triangular plot. You can

make a round plot look rectangular and vice versa, by choosing the pool shape you like and then blurring the outer boundaries with shrubs and trees.

5 Layering When designing a pool garden, think vertically. The water surface is always flat, so is the area surrounding the pool. If you line that with walls of tall trees, the effect is one of a box dug into another box. Plant a transitional, medium-height layer, such as shrubs or multi-stemmed trees.

KEY ELEMENTS

What Screened off swimming pool area of a private garden.

Where Aerdenhout, the Netherlands.

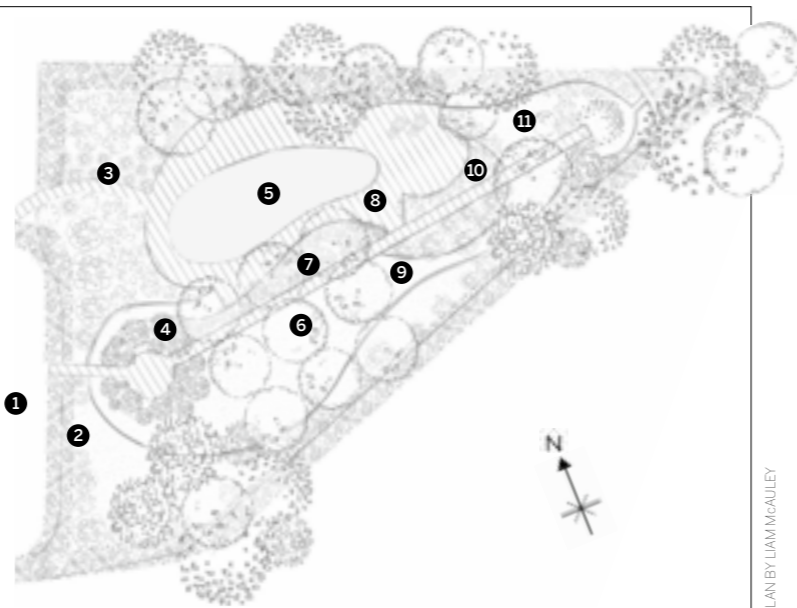
Soil Sandy, but with a fairly thick humus layer.

Garden size 350 square metres.

Special features Unconventional, kidney-shaped pool that is surrounded by layered planting to create an overall feel of a sheltered, secret garden.

Designed by Bart Hoes, Groene Architectuur (barthoes.nl).

- 1 Main garden
- 2 *Taxus baccata* hedge
- 3 Outdoor shower
- 4 Cloud-pruned *Buxus sempervirens* hedge
- 5 Swimming pool
- 6 Cluster of nine *Platanus x hispanica*
- 7 *Zuidenwind* sculpture by Jan Jacobs Mulder
- 8 Decking area
- 9 Gravel
- 10 *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Gracillimus'
- 11 Seating area



PLAN BY LIAM MCAULEY

