secret garden

Beautiful blooms abound in this flower-filled sanctuary, which belies its compact proportions

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY **MATTEO CARASSALE**

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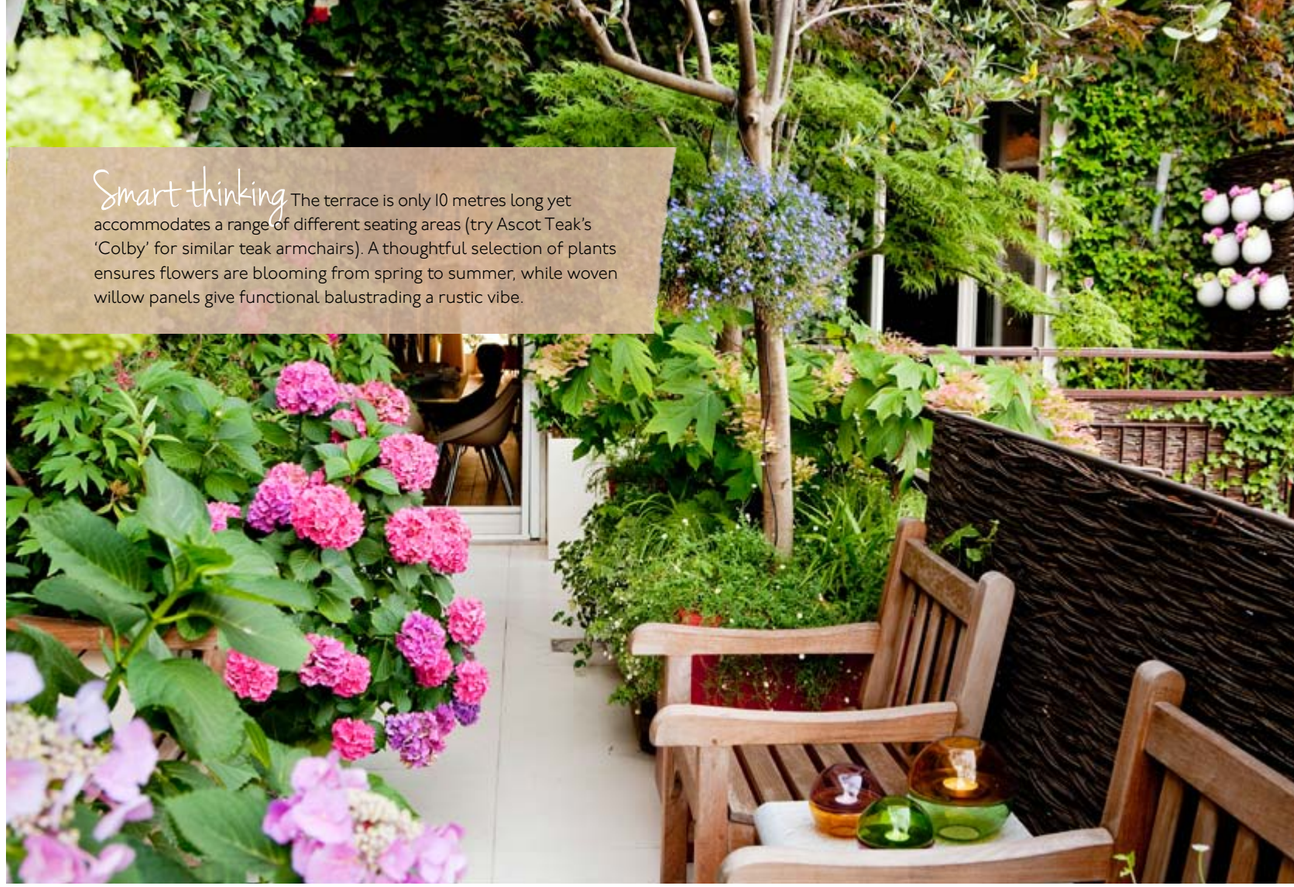
This secluded terrace garden overflows with colourful hydrangeas and greenery, and includes numerous spots where its owner Gianmatteo can relax and entertain; for a lounger like this, try Winton's Teak. **Opposite:** A strategically placed mirror at one end of the terrace gives the illusion that the small space is double its size. >

THE BEAUTIFUL TERRACE bordering Gianmatteo's Milan apartment is proof positive that no matter the size of the outdoor space, a verdant garden can be created. This balcony brings a breath of country air to its urban location, thanks to design touches that hide functional elements and plants that introduce colour and movement.

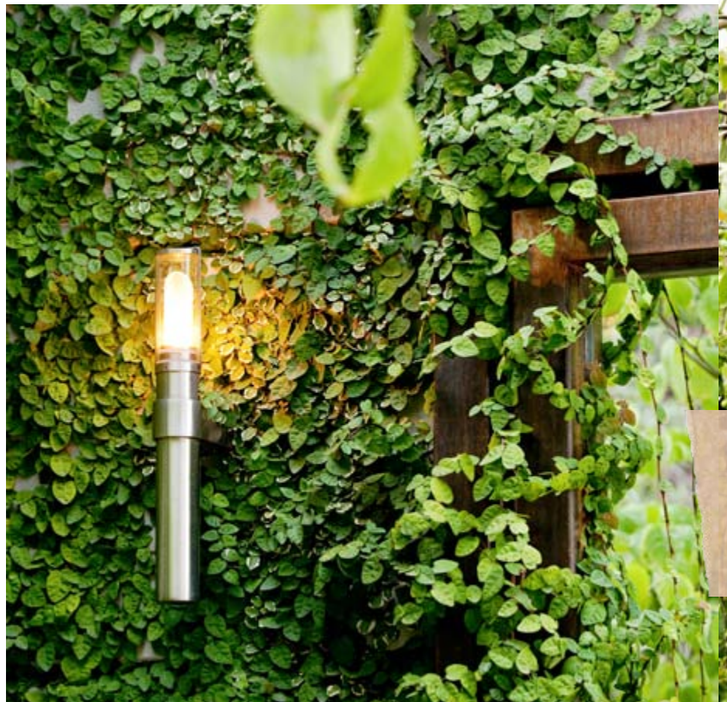
The narrow corridor is framed along one side by a tall wall shrouded in ivy, clematis and jasmine, and on the other, by maples and silvery-grey foliage from olive trees. Panels of woven willow hide the balustrade and contribute to the sense of privacy. A screen at one end of the space is hung with vases in which an array of blooms can be displayed in an ever-changing backdrop. Shrubs, small trees and all manner of statement plants burst from pots and planters lining the way, interspersed with seating areas that include room for both lounging and dining – perfect for Gianmatteo, who likes to entertain at his home during the summer months. "The garden's colours bring me constant joy – every season there's a fragrance or bloom that strikes my curiosity and entices me outdoors," says Gianmatteo.

Top right: Gianmatteo relishes time spent in his peaceful garden. Neutral pavers add a sense of light and prevent the terrace being overwhelmed by a looming wall; try the 'Santorini' series from Amber Tiles to get this look. Hanging vases stocked with fresh blooms {left}, add colour to the willow-screened wall – Ikea's 'Asker' pots offer a similar look.



Smart thinking The terrace is only 10 metres long yet accommodates a range of different seating areas (try Ascot Teak's 'Colby' for similar teak armchairs). A thoughtful selection of plants ensures flowers are blooming from spring to summer, while woven willow panels give functional balustrading a rustic vibe.

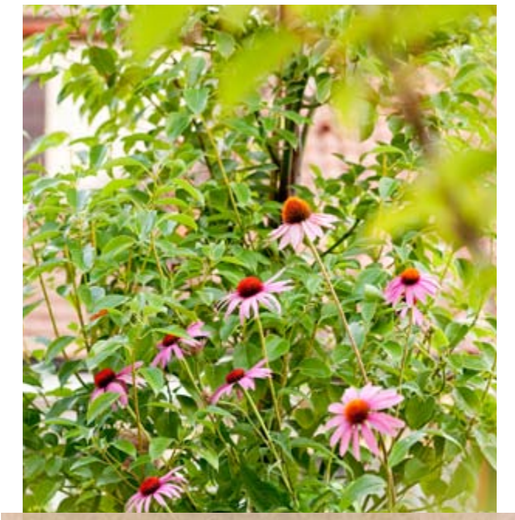
"In summer, I sit between the *hydrangeas* and simply observe the beautiful flowers. The terrace has a *romantic mood* thanks to the variety of blooms" ~ Gianmatteo



Hidden extras A rustic wooden birdhouse tucked into a tree provides refuge for feathered friends (try birdhouses.com.au), while a climbing fig (left) softens the angular edges of a metal-framed mirror; try Rivas Designs for elegant outdoor made-to-order mirrors. >

To dine for Bordered by tall buildings, the terrace's dining area is something of a sun trap, allowing plants such as agapanthus and callistemon to flourish. The folding dining chairs can be conveniently squirrelled away in the cool winter months: for similar, try Milan Direct's 'Seville' folding chairs.

"I wanted a *rustic* yet contemporary atmosphere - I don't like perfection and order in a garden" ~ Gianmatteo



Urban exposure The greenery-filled terrace feels a world away from its city location, thanks to an abundance of planters, which are home to vivacious, colourful plants like bay laurel, euphorbia, agapanthus and echinacea. Try Garden Life for a wide variety of pots and planters. An LED lamp (bottom right) boosts night-time illumination – Smart & Green's 'Illuminated Egg' lamp from Cafe Culture is similar – provided elsewhere in the dining area by unobtrusive wall lights; visit Beacon Lighting to see a large selection of outdoor wall lighting. hb