

'I created a luxury garden on a budget'

With no previous gardening experience, **Becky Russell** pushed her DIY skills to the max, building a pergola, outdoor kitchen and geodome greenhouse



BEFORE

MY GARDEN PLAN

WHO LIVES HERE? I'm Becky Russell, 42, a content creator @surreyhouseanddiy and an entrepreneur @diyherway. I live here with my husband, Graham, 42, a software developer, and our children, Isabel, 10, and Joshua, six.

WHAT WAS UPDATED? We took down the garage and a few obstructing trees, then built a terrace over the footprint and added a pergola, outdoor kitchen and adjoining geodome greenhouse.

WHY THE CHANGE? The pebbledash garage was ugly and in the way – it was the first thing we saw when we came outside – and the garden was overgrown.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE? Five years so far as we've had to save up along the way. We still have changes we want to make.

TOTAL COST £8,619

Becky and Graham Russell instantly fell in love with this garden when they came to view the 1950s three-bed semi. 'We'd been living in a sixth-floor flat and wanted outdoor space for the kids,' Becky says. 'I was enamoured with the 100-ft-long garden and its three giant oak trees at the end, but not with the property. However, my estate agent cousin pointed out that we could change the inside, and the big south-facing garden was an opportunity not to miss.'

THE PROJECT

From the outset, the couple knew they wanted to knock down the eyesore garage encroaching on their space. But they were on a budget and needed to save up. 'We didn't have much of a plan,' says Becky. 'We thought we'd make the lawn bigger, but later on it made more sense to replace the old patio

outside the back door and extend it over the garage base.' The new patio inspired Becky to build an outdoor kitchen, erect the pergola and put together a geodome greenhouse. As a DIY influencer with a budget-conscious mind, she tackled the work herself, learning new skills from YouTube tutorials.

WHAT WE DID

The garage project kicked off when Becky and Graham received some inheritance. Her dad's friend, a builder, offered to build the patio for mates' rates, and the couple saved by doing the sand and cement structural grouting themselves. Graham, from South Africa, loves a *braai* (barbecue), so Becky wanted to create an outdoor kitchen for him.



'This is my favourite corner as I can sit and look out over the whole garden,' says Becky. 'I bought the furniture for a bargain at a Love Home & Garden sale in Kent. We have a Keter storage box for the cushions near the house.'



PATIO PLANNING

Consider slip resistance, style, and weather durability, when choosing patio materials

'My parents gave us the planter in which Graham is growing potatoes with pretty purple flowers, and I added gorgeous pink lupins and peonies,' says Becky. 'I wanted the curved detail in the patio edge to echo the fence arches and geodome shape'



'I chose the leaf print melamine plate set and seagrass mats to add colour and interest,' says Becky. 'I sourced bespoke covers for the furniture and outdoor kitchen from Kover-it, which fit perfectly and were a bargain'

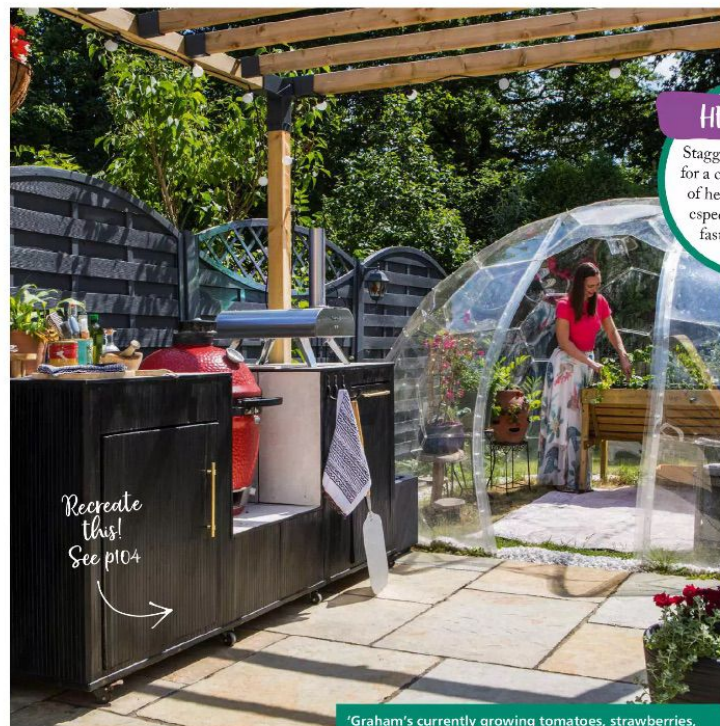
My style tips

THINK FUN AND FUNCTION

I bought extendable washing poles from Amazon and set them into large plastic plant pots from Homebase, which I spray-painted black. Each pole is secured with Postcrete. I drilled three drainage holes just above the concrete line to prevent waterlogging and without affecting stability. Once the concrete set, I added a layer of pebbles topped with soil and planted flowers. I string rope between the pots to hang my washing or festoon lights.

KEEP IT CLEAN I swear by Wet & Forget to remove mould and lichen. You simply spray it onto fences, walls and patios – I even use it on the trampoline and outdoor rug – then you just leave it to work its magic with no rinsing or scrubbing required.

MAKE FENCING A FEATURE I fell in love with the arched fence panels that are like a wave, and searched until I found a company that sold them in my budget. I alternated the trellis panel with the solid style and spray painted with Sadolin's Anthracite Grey using my Wagner 590 universal paint sprayer.



Recreate this!
See p104

Becky watched videos to learn how to build outdoor cupboards made with pressure-treated timber. She boarded these out with exterior-grade plywood and finished them with outdoor porcelain tiles. 'Heavy-duty castors elevate them off the ground so they don't rot, it's handy because we can move them around,' she says. 'I bought a Butler sink for £20 on Facebook and taught myself basic plumbing. Graham can wash his hands while cooking and the water runs into a bucket! It's simple but functional.'

The following year, Becky was fortunate enough to be gifted a geodome from GeoDomeX, which she turned into a greenhouse prompted by a Pinterest picture. 'Graham loves growing veggies and herbs so he can easily grab basil when he's making pizzas to cook in our pizza oven,' says Becky.

HIGHS & LOWS

Becky planned to sell the old prefab garage but, when she discovered asbestos, she had to pay specialists to demolish it instead. After successfully completing the patio's structural grouting, they found the jointing compound finish wasn't good. 'The buff colour mached

HERB HINTS

Stagger planting times for a continuous supply of herbs. This can be especially useful for fast growers like basil

'Graham's currently growing tomatoes, strawberries, chilli, basil and mint in the geodome greenhouse,' says Becky. 'He's also cultivating a bougainvillea plant, which likes dry heat - in winter we bring it inside'

'We replanted pots we brought from our flat and I've added to the collection over time, buying from Facebook Marketplace and garden centre sales,' says Becky

the Indian sandstone but it soon discoloured,' says Becky. 'Jet washing made it flake and crumble so we ended up using sand and cement instead.'

A metal pergola they put up to house the outdoor kitchen snapped after heavy rainwater gathered in the tarpaulin. 'eDecks kindly gifted me a wooden pergola, which easily slotted together in an afternoon,' says Becky. 'Putting the panels together for the geodome was more challenging, however, because there were hundreds of screws, although you can pay for someone to assemble it.' The finished result was worth the effort. 'It's super strong, completely waterproof and works brilliantly as a greenhouse,' she says.

THE FINAL DETAILS

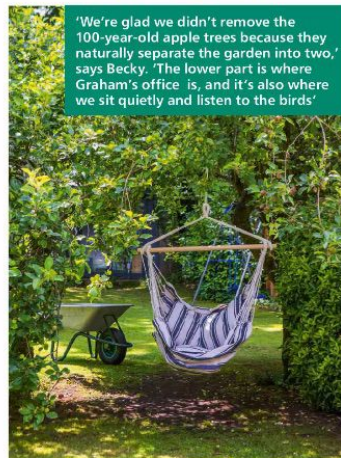
Outdoor furniture came from a warehouse sale and Becky recommends garden accessories from affordable brands like JYSK and VonHaus. Her confidence has grown with each project, prompting her to set up a DIY account @diyherway. 'I get so much



'My dad's an electrician and wired in the festoon lights, which come in string lengths and plug into one another,' says Becky. 'The quality is great, they don't break or collect water, while the rattan pendant light is solar'



'We're glad we didn't remove the 100-year-old apple trees because they naturally separate the garden into two,' says Becky. 'The lower part is where Graham's office is, and it's also where we sit quietly and listen to the birds'

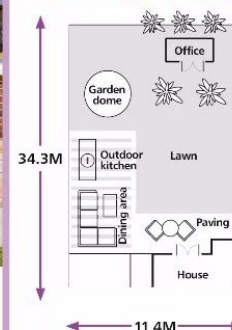


'I fill pots with perennials, like African daisies, creeping forget-me-nots and petunias,' says Becky. 'They're so colourful and easy to grow'

satisfaction from DIY and hope my channel inspires women and girls to feel the same,' she says. 'My outdoor kitchen is my biggest achievement - it's been nominated for 'Best DIY Creation' at the ufnish.com Home Awards! Now, we have a lovely social terrace with a quiet relaxing area down by the oak trees, and I love our garden even more than I did when we first moved in.' 🏡

'I fell in love with the Balinese fringe umbrella on Instagram and treated myself for my 40th birthday,' says Becky. 'I made the holder by half filling a pot with Postcrete and sticking a plastic tube down the middle so I can swap in my rotary washing line, which is handy near the back door'

THE LAYOUT



THE DETAILS

Asbestos garage removal	£2,000
Patio	£4,500
Outdoor kitchen	£850
Pizza oven	£130
Outdoor sofa set	£750
Accessories	£389
TOTAL	£8,619

SHOPPING LIST

Raj Blend Indian sandstone slabs, £22 per sq m, Stone Traders. For similar, try Classico pergola, £365.66, eDecks. For similar, try DIY garden dome kit, £139, Build with Hubs. For similar, try Bono minimo ceramic grill, £399, Kamado Kings. Outdoor pizza oven, £129.99, Seville striped hanging swing chair, £29.99, both VonHaus. For similar, try Malaga Beige rattan garden corner sofa with coffee table, £699, Furniture Outlet. Pro Connect festoon lights, £44.99, Lights4fun. For similar, try Verve ribbed recycled plastic plant pots, £28, B&Q. Solar Teardrop wicker style pendant light, £51.99, ValueLights. Garden Sanctuary cantilever parasol, £92.99, Robert Dyas. Tufted protea flower cushions, £12 each, Primark. For similar, try Nest Cleo in- & outdoor rug in White/Black from £49, benuta.