



Inspired by her travels in Africa, Jo Scofield built a secluded wooden and glass cabin and this decking platform in her garden, which is wrapped around an apple tree



"It's nice to play music. There's something about vinyl that is a bit special"



"We call the cabin 'kibanda', which means 'hut' in Swahili. It's a lovely place to escape"

# "The cabin is my retreat from the world"

Jo Scofield's secluded garden hideaway brings the African wilderness to the heart of Bristol and makes an idyllic escape from the busyness of life

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Home for the wildlife documentary director and producer Jo Scofield, her partner and two teenage children is a basement flat in an 18th-century Georgian house, close to the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol. A flight of stone steps leads down to what was once the servants' entrance and into the flat, which spans the lower floors of two adjoining houses, with spacious, airy rooms. The houses were built on the steep land at the top of the gorge that heads down to the river Avon, so the impression you get as you gaze out of the back windows onto the garden is

that you are almost in the trees, on a level with the squirrels and birds, with a view in the distance of the Mendip hills. It is truly peaceful for a city location.

### Garden nature and nurture

The garden seems to descend forever. 'It was overgrown when we moved in, says Jo, 'but there were lots of apple trees, quinces and fruit bushes. It was too big for us to manage on our own, so we offered to create allotments for friends and neighbours and we share some beehives, too. I spend a lot of time in the garden, mostly weeding, which I find really therapeutic. I was

lucky to work with Monty Don, directing him on *Gardeners' World*; he taught me everything I know about nurturing a garden.'

Inspired by the viewing terraces on African game lodges, Jo built a wooden decking platform on one of the lower levels of the garden, fitted around the trunk of an apple tree, which is the perfect suntrap suspended among the branches. It makes you feel like you are in the middle of the jungle, rather than a back garden in Bristol.

Having spent her gap year teaching in Kenya, Jo felt a strong connection to Africa and returned there during the >>>



"I love adding splashes of colour to a simple backdrop; the beaded chairs came from Africa"



"Luckily, we discovered we could plumb the toilet into the main pipe that connects to the house"



>>> following years to work in Nairobi and travel across east and central Africa. 'I always wanted to bring beautiful handmade products back with me,' says Jo, 'so I started my business From The Tribe, which supports artisans in Africa by selling their woven bowls, beaded chairs, wooden stools, cushions, lampshades, necklaces and artwork.'

**Memories of childhood**

Her home is filled with many of these artefacts, lending it a rustic and tribal feel, which is echoed in the standalone oak cabin with a sedum roof, a third of the way down the hilly garden. 'I grew up in Devon and a friends' family ran a company making oak and glass buildings, and I remember thinking that one day, I'd like a house like that. This cabin is a nod to that childhood memory and also my travels in Africa.'

It was built by carpenter Dan James and completed by designer Ryan Broom who used reclaimed materials – such as

the pan and mug rack, which was once an old ladder. The cosy cabin includes a kitchen area with electric hob, fridge, dining table and chairs, toilet (that connects to the pipe in the main house), double bed, African beaded Yoruba armchairs and bookshelves. There is also a wood-burning stove to ensure the cabin is as cosy in the colder months as it is cool in the summer.

'My children study in here; a neighbour used it last week to finish his writing project; my husband and I stay in the cabin as a getaway and it's a handy spare room when my mum comes to stay,' says Jo. 'It's my retreat from the world; you forget about everything when you're relaxing in the cabin, surrounded by trees. Some people call it "the treehouse", as you can just glance out of the window and see the squirrels and birds darting in and out of the branches. It's wonderful to wake up to the sounds of nature all around.'

For more information, see fromthetribe.com



ABOVE As space is limited, the designer, Ryan Broom, came up with some clever storage solutions, including this glass rack and shelf, upcycled from reclaimed materials. The mug rack was made from an old ladder