



A garden office it's the perfect location

For one couple, commuting to the office means a stroll to the end of their flower-filled garden

VIEW FROM THE HOUSE Framed by the frothy lime-green flowers of lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), a series of stepping stones leads to the office, which is screened from the house by some well-placed trees

working from home



VIEW FROM THE OFFICE
This idyllic spot outside the house is a real suntrap, perfect for coffee breaks



When Sally and Matthew Godley moved to their house in north-west London just over two years ago, the garden was key to their dream of creating a wonderful working environment from home.

Not only would they be able to spend more time with their baby girl Maddie (now two), but it would also help avoid overheads like rent and travel. Now, just a short walk down the garden path takes them to the most beautiful summerhouse, where they've created a stunning and stimulating work space. Sally runs a childcare vetting agency from there, and Matthew his interior design consultancy.

"Working from home has changed our lives dramatically," says Sally. "I'm never stuck in traffic, never late for work and, although I work from home, having the office in the summerhouse gives me just enough distance from family life to help me concentrate." Then there is, of course, the best view any office could ever offer. >>

working from home

WORKING ENVIRONMENT
"Sticking to office hours is tricky, but we manage quite well, and definitely better than if the office was in the house," says Matthew, pictured with Maddie, below

The office

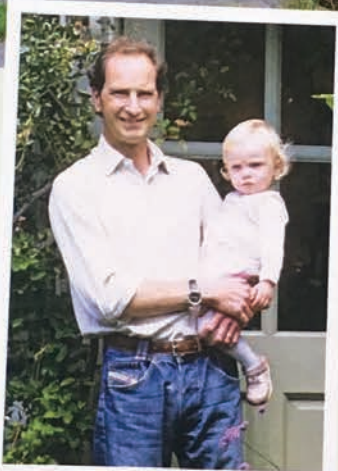
Matthew, being an interior designer, was in charge of commissioning their perfect workspace from specialist company The Garden House.

"It all arrived in kit form, pre-painted to my own specifications, and was erected on site. The whole job took only three days to construct," says Matthew.

Summerhouse offices are not, as people often imagine, some kind of stylish garden shed – too hot in the summer and too chilly in winter. This office has all the mod-cons needed to run efficiently and provide a comfortable working environment. The power and phone supply are run from the house, an electric heater set to a timer keeps things cosy in winter, blinds shield the sun in summer and there's air-con for those really hot days. There are also plenty of electric sockets, smart spotlights and even a security alarm.

"Because we live in a conservation area, we needed to obtain planning permission. This was all done through The Garden House, so it was pretty straightforward," says Matthew.

The Godleys have kept to a calm and traditional interior, with sea-grass flooring, and beautiful tongue-and-groove panelling. It's all very fitting for a summerhouse and works wonderfully well.



"It all arrived in kit form, and the whole job took only three days to construct"

ADDRESS BOOK

- + The Garden House (01843-821851; www.thegardenhouse.ltd.uk) can design, manufacture and install buildings in a range of styles, from a small studio to larger projects.
- + Jane Brockbank Gardens (07944-345272; www.janebrockbank.com). Jane's garden design skills have won her a silver medal at the Chelsea Flower Show, and she works closely with clients to transform their outside space.
- + Best Bear Childcare (0870-7201277; www.bestbear.co.uk).
- + Matthew Godley Interior Design (020 8968 1306). >>

The garden

The original garden was very overgrown, but had two lovely fruit trees, a crab apple and a plum tree.

"We wanted it to look like a cottage-style garden because we both love colour and the traditional style," explains Sally. "Although we had a clear vision up to a point, discussing our ideas and thoughts with garden designer Jane Brockbank helped so much as she had loads of suggestions, and guided us in the right direction."

"The garden is long and narrow, so it was important to create a sense of open space and still leave enough room for deep beds where layers of plants could develop," says Jane. "The summerhouse at the bottom of the garden makes a picture-perfect backdrop."

Matthew and Sally each have their own approach to gardening. "Matthew is more of a hardcore gardener. While he's busy ploughing away, I just potter about and water the plants in the evenings. But mostly I play with Maddie on the grass, and use every opportunity to relax in the garden – I find it so peaceful," says Sally. "Because the garden is a manageable size, it's very low maintenance. I'm glad we weren't too ambitious. If it was any bigger, we might have trouble."

This beautiful, happy garden fulfils so many purposes. Not only does it bring continued joy to its occupants, but it also acts as a calming and soothing bridge between home and work life.



THE PLANTING The garden reflects the Goldleys' passion for colour. Relaxed cottage-style planting includes fragrant fennel, with its soft feathery texture and liquorice smell. There are splashes of pink from the Mars midget (*knautia macedonia*), while foxgloves and "purple sensation" alliums add some height to the back of the borders

THYME OUT On a rustic wooden table outside the house, a selection of potted herbs are grouped together. "One of the great joys of our garden is the herbs I grow. I use them all the time in cooking and I love brushing them with my fingers as I pass to release the fragrance," says Sally. w&h



working from home

SHELTERED SPOT The original brick wall provides the perfect backdrop for a range of climbing plants, including the evergreen star jasmine (*trachelospermum*), cleverly positioned to tumble down beside the wooden seat to make the most of its sweet fragrance in summer

"The garden is long and narrow, so it was important to create a sense of open space"

