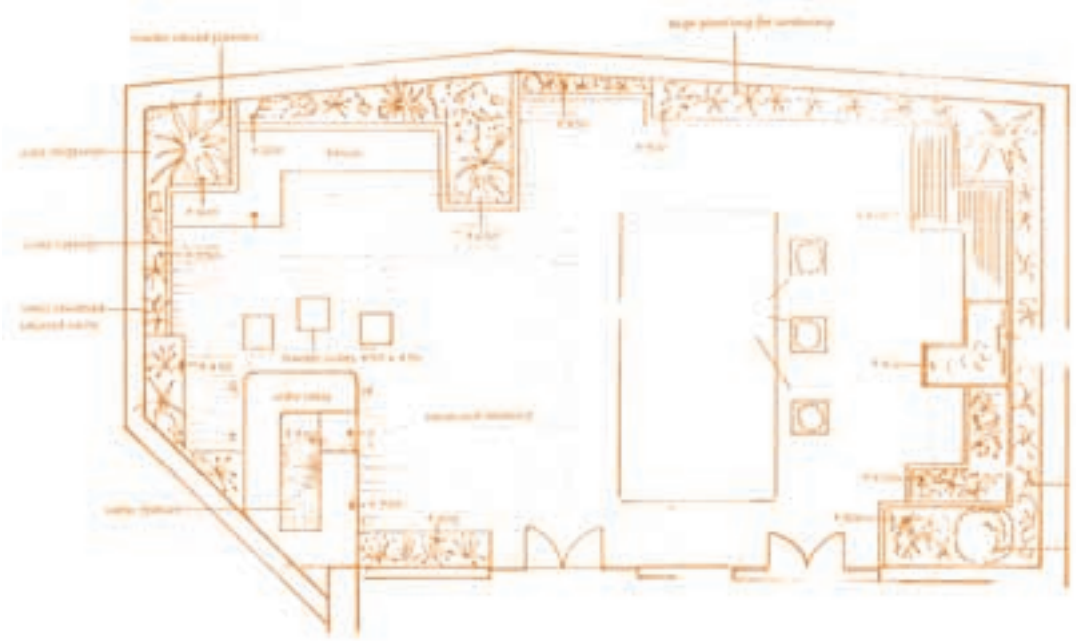

Jo Thompson's design for this London Docklands roof garden uses fibreglass inserts in lightweight marine plywood planters to minimise the load on the roof.

RIVER LOOKOUT

High-rise views over the Thames

IMAGES: JO THOMPSON

Commissions for exposed rooftop gardens are becoming commonplace as the number and height of apartment blocks heads ever skyward. In October 2005, Jo Thompson of the English Garden Design Company was asked to transform a banal terrace of London stock bricks and concrete paving into a lush contemporary urban meadow. Boasting a Thames-side position on the seventh storey, the terrace enjoys spectacular views over the high-rise Docklands riverscape and the client, a businessman with teenage children, wished to make as much of this as possible.

The project commenced with the removal of an old spiral staircase and the craning-in of a large hot tub and ipe timber for decking. All other materials were brought up in a small lift. Originally only the western half of the terrace was to be landscaped as the client had planning permission to erect a glass room to house his gym equipment in the other half. However, once he saw the result, Thompson was instructed to continue with the remaining area while the gym equipment was relocated.

The design seeks to reflect the river below by incorporating two water features, one of which is set into a slate table with water falling as a highly controlled sheet. Planters are made of lightweight marine plywood, which is painted white and coped with the same ipe hardwood as the decking. The planters are lined with fibreglass inserts and contain a mix of evergreen and architectural plants, including *Agave americana*, phormium and *Pittosporum tobira* 'Nanum', and perennials such as Verbena bonariensis, achillea, geraniums, molinia and *Miscanthus nepalensis* to contribute to the 'urban meadow' brief. Thompson has gone on to landscape two further terraces at the property.

GARDEN FACT FILE

Designer: Jo Thompson Tel: 07834 196193
Website: www.englishgardendesigncompany.com
Location: London Docklands **Size:** 50m²
Aspect and soil: north, east and west facing; imported soil
Project started: October 2005
Project completed: August 2006
Cost: over £70,000
Design fees: 2 per cent
Hard landscape: 90 per cent
Soft landscape: 8 per cent
Contractors: Merriments Landscaping