

Life

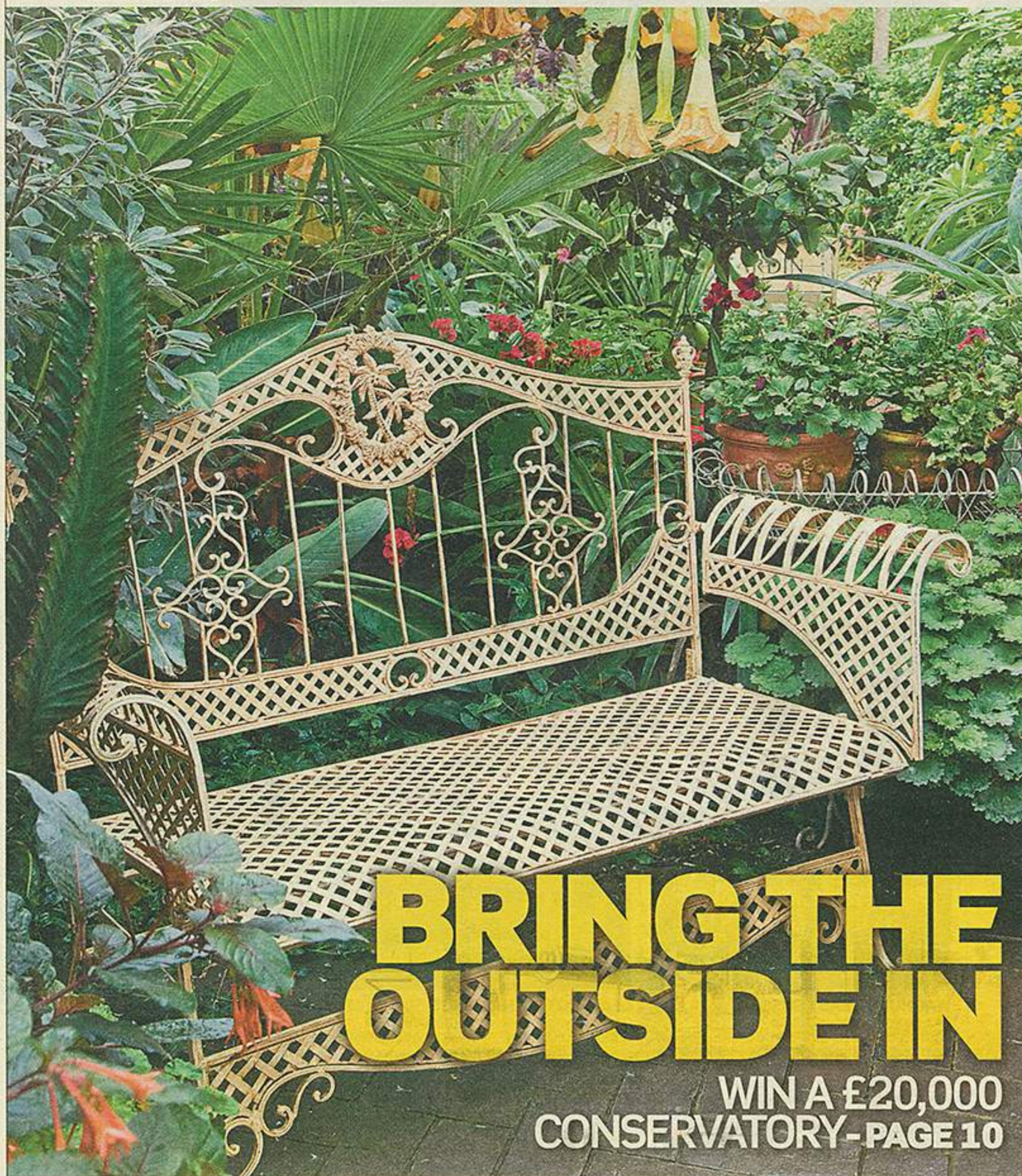
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WE ARE SAILING
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BRING THE OUTSIDE IN

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Top-name designers see the green light



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Who could resist these classic dream machines?



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The time is right for a move back to town



ELSPETH THOMPSON'S GARDEN CHOICE



THIS WEEK:
ELEGANT
OUTDOOR
DINING

With a subtle eye for colour and contemporary design, James Aldridge has transformed a formerly unprepossessing roof space into this elegant outdoor dining room. The smart oak table and white polypropylene chairs by British designer Jasper Morrison would look equally at home inside or out, and there's even a curvaceous plastic arm chair by Philippe Starck (1). Plants in stylish square and cylindrical pots (2) have all the presence of pieces of sculpture – the spiky astelias (3) in particular. Key in creating the “room-like” feel are the painted wood panels that have been erected in front of existing crumbling brick walls up to a height of about 6ft. Not only do these



neatly enclose the space and screen off a composting area behind the table; they also provide hanging space for white plaster panels with spiral shell designs (from www.boldstonesculpture.co.uk). Multi-stem silver birches (5) are interspersed with lavender (6) to form a diaphanous screen from the neighbours that creates dancing dappled shadows and fantastic fragrance.

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1 INDOOR/OUTDOOR FURNITURE

Light, stackable and available in seven colours, the Air chair by Jasper Morrison is £68 including delivery from contemporary furniture specialists A White Room in Colne, Lancashire (01282 862626; www.awhiteroom.com).

2 CONTEMPORARY POTS

Pots play as large a part as plants and furniture in creating the modern feel of

this garden. Primrose of London (0870 499 0220; www.primrose-london.co.uk) has a great range of large planters in simple shapes including the tall cuboid Sephia in polystone (a smooth durable mixture of resin and powdered stone) from £59.95; while IKEA's white-glazed Mynta (67cm tall by 37 wide) is a bargain at just £29.

3 ASTELIAS

Spiky, sword-shaped leaves with a silvery

sheen, even in shade, make *Astelia chathamica* a popular choice in contemporary gardens, and it does well in pots provided it is not allowed to dry out. Architectural Plants of Horsham (01403 891772; www.architecturalplants.com) – one of the best places for plants with a sculptural presence – has it in 3-litre pots from £9.35.

4 MULTI-STEM SILVER BIRCHES

Silver birches look good as multi-stemmed specimens, their

graceful arching branches softening the lines of sleek architectural schemes. The Himalayan birch, *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*, has snowy white stems and is available as a 2.4m multi-stemmed tree from Pure Plants of Uckfield, E Sussex (01825 890858; www.pureplants.com) for £69.50. Or

try your luck at planting three small bare-rooted whip plants (available in winter at a few pounds each) close together and keeping well watered.

5 LAVENDER

The lavender in the picture is *Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso', whose long-stemmed fragrant flowers are favoured by the perfume industry. This and many other more unusual varieties are available from Downderry Nurseries of Hadlow, Kent (01732 810081; www.downderry-nursery.co.uk), whose stands at Chelsea and Hampton Court flower shows are always such a joy. The firm's Lavender Weekend is June 27-28; £3 per adult includes a tour of the nursery and show garden, distillation demonstration and light refreshments.

