



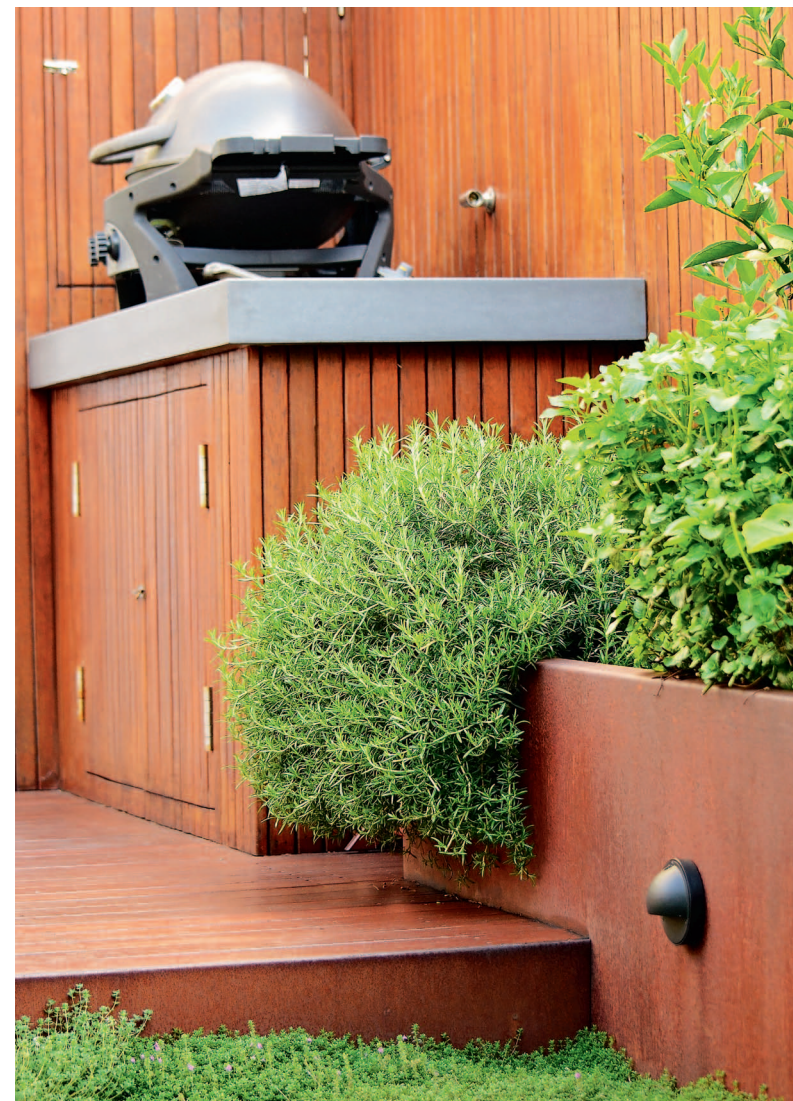
## A GARDENER'S GARDEN

*Don't have much space but still want the garden of your dreams? Don't worry, it's perfectly possible*





Use different-height shrubs to frame a space in an aesthetically pleasing way.



**WORDS:** CASSANDRA ELLIOTT  
**PHOTOS:** KATRINE MARDINI

Steve Warner from Outhouse Design created this practical garden that offers year-round interest and an escape from inner-city living in a little slice of paradise. With the help of Greg Soster from Outside Space, a dream was brought to life in a small Newtown property.

The owner wanted a garden that was visually stunning, offered up fruit and herbs, and required little maintenance. This garden has strong, structural plantings that offer lots of activity options for the avid gardener, yet can still thrive with very little effort.

The planted production beds allow for crop rotation if you're feeling like being hands-on. By using the large, organic step stone as the paving solution, the bluestone offers an informal pathway connection that meanders around the garden, while offering practicality and intrigue by visually stretching the garden. It is contrasted aesthetically by the thymus alba groundcover, which softens the pavers' edges for a fuller, modern look, while nicely balancing

out the crisper line connection of the 600mm x 400mm bluestone pavers.

The hero of the design is the pre-existing crepe myrtle, whose bold trunk demands attention against the contrasting fence.

"It goes to show that sometimes all you need to do is create the correct backdrop," Steve says. "In this case, painting the fence a dark colour (Dulux Luck) and applying just a little shaping to the canopy makes what was once an insignificant tree the statement of the garden, with its amazing trunk colour the hero."

Along with the crepe myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*), the garden uses climbers and espalier to draw up the eye, creating the illusion of height in a small space. The climbers and espalier used offer up fruit, delightful aromas and flowers that are a stark visual contrast to the dark fences.

The biggest challenge here was that a concrete slab covered the area that gets the most sun, which meant no in-ground planting was possible. Steve explains that the solution was to "fabricate a bespoke, raised Corten planter with a sensuous shape that leads you



**TOP LEFT** A wasted vertical space was turned into a gardener's cook station with space for the Weber. **LEFT** Thymus alba groundcover softens the pavers' edges for a fuller, modern look.

around the corner in this 'L-shaped' garden, making it feel twice as wide. The cost-effective planter removed the need for footings near services and makes installation of path lighting so simple." The curves of the planter also draw your eye into the garden, offering a great contrast to the groundcovers that spill over the edge, such as the *Dichondra argentea* 'Silver Falls' or the *Rosmarinus* 'Blue Lagoon' (creeping rosemary).

As well as being visually interesting, this garden needed to be practical, which is why there's additional lockable storage at the bottom





Delight the senses by using climbers and espalier such as *Trachelospermum* (star jasmine), *Passiflora edulis* (passionfruit), *Citrus x latifolia* (Tahitian lime) or *Laurus nobilis* (bay laurel).



**ABOVE** The raised Corten planter offers soft curves that break up the boxed-in feeling small spaces sometimes create.

of the garden with internal lighting. The garden beds are fed by grey water from the water tank concealed behind the timber screen.

Steve explains that to break up the space and add more functionality, some structures were added. "We installed a low timber deck to create a seamless connection from the lounge to the garden (with enough space for entertaining), and we transformed a wasted vertical space with services behind into a gardener's cook station with storage for the Weber and tools. Trellis was installed to screen the shed, while allowing air flow and natural light, painted the same colour as the fence to highlight the foliage of the scented jasmine and the bark of the crepe myrtle.

"This small inner-city garden really punches above its weight when it comes to packing so much into such a small space," Steve adds, "but it shows that with clever design, the right materials and planting combination, you can deliver a connection to the senses year-round." [outhousedesign.com.au](http://outhousedesign.com.au)