

The far-rear corner of the backyard has been transformed into a cooking and dining zone.

The finer details

This Sydney backyard may be on the small side, but it meets this family's every need

“An inviting space that can be used for intimate occasions with close family as well as larger gatherings”



WORDS: Erina Starkey PHOTOS: Katrine Mardini

T

he challenge with a family backyard is trying to create something that engages all members of the family, while maintaining design coherency. The owner of this property wanted an inviting space that can be used for intimate occasions with close family as well as larger gatherings – and there had to be room for the kids to use their skateboards and bikes. Challenging as this sounds, Steve Warner from OUTHOUSE design was confident he could transform this confined space into something that meets everyone’s needs.

To create the desired sense of intimacy, Steve added a timber and wire screen to the existing timber fence. The screen was covered with *Hardenbergia*, a native with mauve blooms, to thicken the layers and contrast the burgundy foliage of the *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’ feature tree.

For year-round form and structure, there are perimeter plantings of *Liriope muscari*, *Pittosporum tobira* and *Buxus sempervirens*. “The planting borders create a traditional feel, which really captures the personality of the homeowners. It’s not brash and bold, but more layered with subtle areas of interest,” says Steve.

Interest is also offered by the large modular split-stone-slate paving units, which complement the internal finish of the house. “Laying these large-format tiles over a concrete slab ensured long-term stability and a sharp, clean finish,” says Steve.

The owners wanted to be able to relax in a lush, densely planted garden so, to protect the plants from daily encounters with skateboards and tricycles, raised garden beds were created. These were edged with gold-grey cobblestone edging, which works with the slate paving and provides a strong, non-chip surface for dealing with wheeled assaults.

With its in-built seating, modern timber dining area and sleek barbecue facilities, the backyard is designed for all social occasions, big and small. Uplights were placed underneath the hedges to create a warm ambience near the dining area at night, while



TOP When dining, the family and their guests have a leafy vista to enjoy no matter where they look. **ABOVE** To make the utmost of the small garden, the barbecue and the storage space is built in.

OPPOSITE TOP The modern dining area is designed to accommodate alfresco meals in complete comfort. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** Awash with burgundy foliage, a *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’ is the key feature tree.

the use of a planting palette that offers year-round foliage and floral interest makes the space engaging no matter what the season.

“The trick to every small space is the finer details, being consistent with materials and keeping variety to a minimum,” says Steve. By following this approach, he has created a space to rest, entertain and skate – in short, a space that has something for everyone. ■

