

The circular lawn, which is edged in traditional cobblestones, gives the backyard a relaxed feel.

An evolving space

A whimsical plant-filled rear garden retreat that will only improve as the years pass by



ABOVE The mix of groundcover plants includes delicate native violets, lamb's ears, lavender and lush Madagascar jasmine.

OPPOSITE TOP This paved area features a timber outdoor dining setting where the owners can gather with friends and family.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM The plants were chosen for their looks, low maintenance needs and ability to thrive in each microclimate.

WORDS: Carrol Baker **PHOTOS:** Katrine Mardini

To make the most of your outdoor areas and gardens they need to evolve to reflect who you are. Otherwise they simply become unused and unloved spaces. After all, embracing life outdoors is intrinsic to the Australian lifestyle.

For this Sydney family, once the kids had grown,

it was time to transform their lawn into a productive and beautiful area that provides both a peaceful retreat and a contemporary outdoor entertaining area.

"It was goodbye unused cubby house and welcome entertaining space," says Steve Warner of Outhouse Design. "This change also enabled our client, who is a keen gardener, to be more hands-on in the garden and create a space that she could develop over time."

Steve believes that when designing outdoor spaces like this one, they should intrinsically reflect the character and nature of those who will use it. "With its modern paving and traditional feel to the planting borders, this garden captures the personality of the owner – it's not brash and bold but more layered with subtle areas of interest," he says.

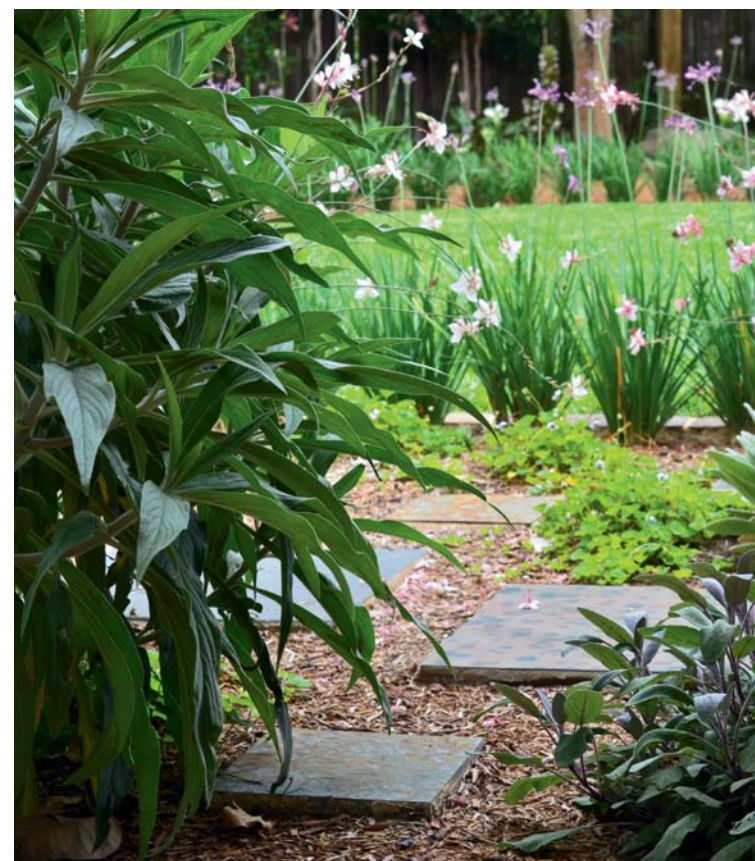
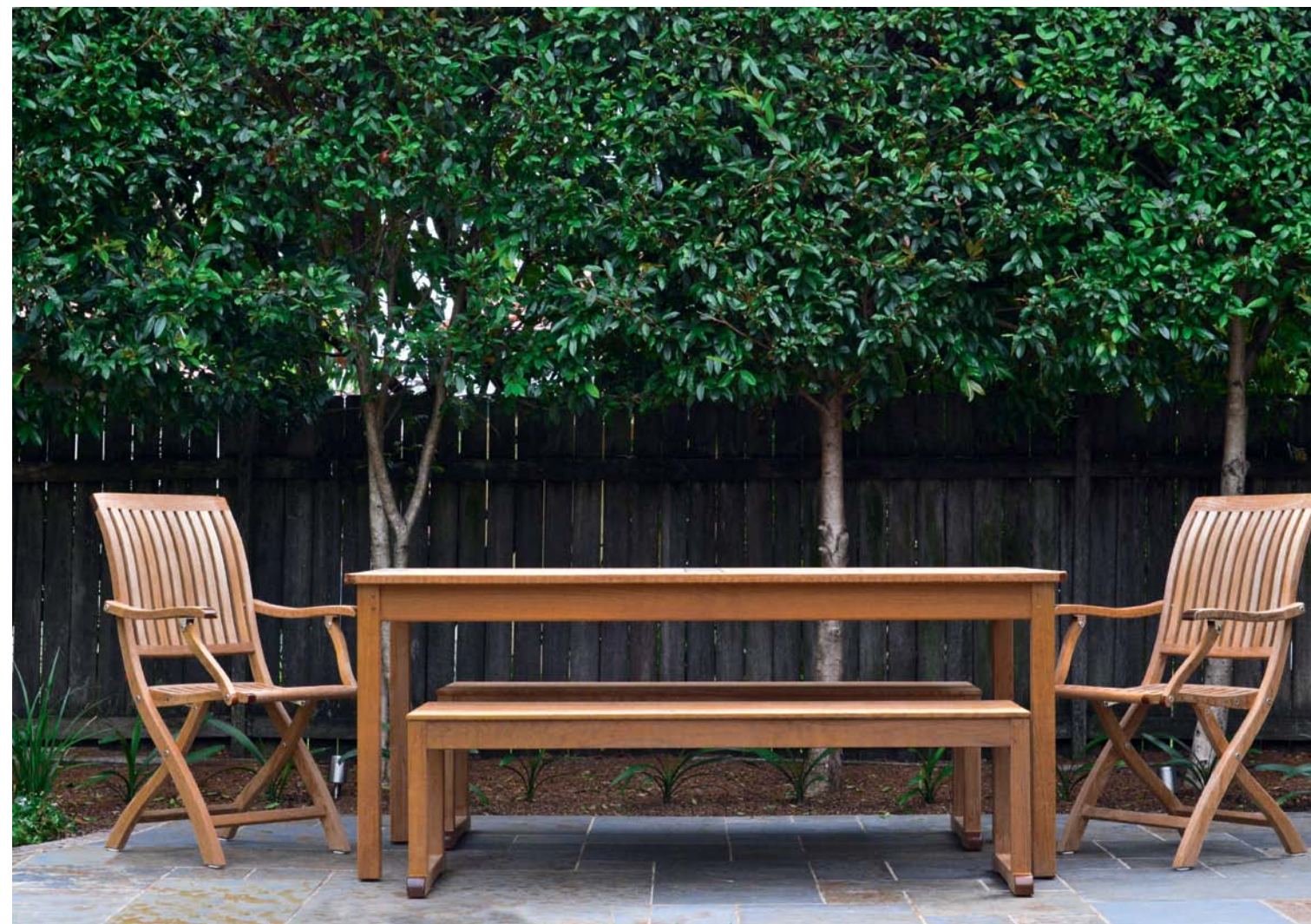
The garden is multi-layered with a rich variety of plantings that provide depth and numerous focal points. The plants were selected not only for their growth habit and foliage, but to ensure there would be colour throughout the garden year-round.

The curves of the lush, green lawn are bordered by pink gaura, allowing the viewer to peep beyond the flowing stems to the garden beds beyond. Groundcover and border plants include ornamental lamb's ears, pretty native violets and blue bugle, which work well with the aromatic sweet scents of lavender and Madagascar jasmine. Elsewhere you will find edible plants and, espaliered along one wall, healthy citrus.

In a corner of the garden a timber bench seat extends an invitation to sit and soak up the quiet ambience of the plant-filled backyard. Across the tidy lawn a timber dining table, chairs and benches offer plenty of seating beside the barbecue. Acting as a formal screen behind this alfresco dining setting is a lilly pillly hedge.

The hardscaping has been kept to a minimum, in keeping with the owner's desire for a sustainable garden. Other than the segmented, modular large-format pavers that flow around the seating areas, there is a simple stepping-stone path and lawn edging of traditional cobblestones.

The result is a garden with an impressive fusion of colours and subtle aromas. It's also a garden with a sense of whimsy and a look that will only improve as the years progress. ■



"A garden with an impressive fusion of colours and subtle aromas"



Doing it right

If you engage the services of a landscape designer you can maximise your garden makeover

WORDS: Jacki Brown

When planning a makeover, half of the challenge is knowing where to start, which is why engaging a landscape design professional is the best way to create the garden you desire. Not only will a landscape designer have practical advice, he or she will also be able to give you a visual and conceptual idea of the new landscape before construction starts.

Adding value

As well as increasing your enjoyment, a designed landscape can increase the functionality of your space and, in time, your investment will pay off by increasing your real estate value. The practical element is crucial; things like the layout of your landscape can help or hinder access and movement around your home, and plants that need more maintenance than you can supply will become

How long?

Depending on the size and complexity of the project, it might take:

- Between three weeks and two months for the design development.
- Between three weeks and two months for a Development Application (DA) to go through council (DAs are required in most cases for retaining walls over 1m in height, pergolas, decks, swimming pools and tree removal).
- Between four weeks and six months to construct the landscape.

untidy and messy. These are just a couple of examples of the types of problems landscape professionals have the experience to help you with.

The benefits of getting advice from a landscape professional are numerous. A landscape designer can integrate your house with your pool, gardens, pergola, driveway and other practical features such as drainage, irrigation, rainwater tanks, microclimate, aspect and utility services. The end result of having all these things considered together is the seamless integration of the indoor and outdoor living areas.

Wealth of knowledge

The expertise and experience of a landscape designer can guide you through the landscape construction process. Someone with horticultural knowledge will be able to give you information about how to maintain the plants in your garden so that it continues to deliver the exact outdoor experience you envisaged.

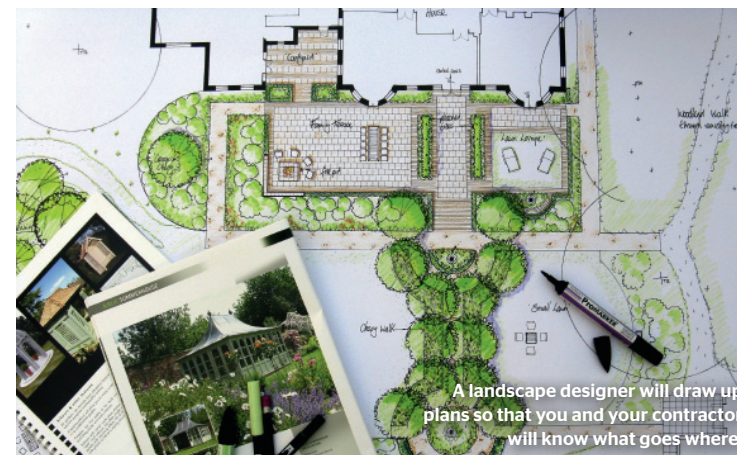
Landscape professionals have practical experience as well as knowledge of design, horticulture, construction and your local council's requirements. As well as selecting plants that will survive and thrive, specifying appropriate materials and devising space-maximising layouts, they can also

Expert tip

If you're planning a combined home renovation and garden makeover, call in a landscape designer at the planning stages so that he or she can work in tandem with your architect or home builder.



before



A landscape designer will draw up plans so that you and your contractor will know what goes where.

recommend good contractors and stage the installation process for your budget requirements.

As with any home or landscaping project, your mantra should be "Do it once and do it right". The extra time spent planning now will save you time and money in the future.

When to start?

You need to call in a landscape designer as early as possible in the planning process. This means:

- **At the concept planning stage** of a renovation or construction, that is, at the same time you engage the architect or building designer.
- **Before you get quotes** from a landscape contractor, home builder or pool builder.
- **When you buy a property**, which means before starting cleaning up, demolition or structural work.
- **Before you start work** on a makeover of an existing garden, if you're planning to do the work yourself.

Finding a designer

Industry association members are bound by a code of ethics and work to professional standards. These practitioners are obliged to achieve a level of quality as measured by their peers as a requirement of their membership. Members of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers and Managers (AILDM) can professionally design your landscape, including applying for council approval for retaining walls, pergolas, paving and pools.

If no structural landscape work is needed, members of the Australian Institute of Horticulture (AIH) can provide planting plans and other horticultural services. Once you have your landscape plan, a member of one of the state-based professional landscape contractor associations can install your landscape for you.

Budgets and briefs

There are other things that need to be considered before work can begin on your new landscape. You will need some or all of the following, depending on your situation:

- **Detailed brief:** This sets out the style of garden you want and your functional requirements. The more detail you can give, the closer the end result will be to what you envisage.
- **Financial budget:** How much do you want to spend? The designer should know this up front so they can advise you on how best to invest your money in the landscape.
- **Contour survey:** This must be prepared by a registered surveyor (especially if council approval is required).
- **Structural or hydraulic engineer:** Consulting an engineer might be necessary if extensive built structures, paving or retaining walls are desired.
- **Arborist's report:** If there is concern for the condition of existing trees on site you will need a consulting arborist to prepare a report.

If you would like to find an AILD member in your area just visit the website (www.aildm.com.au) and search the Members' Directory. ■

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