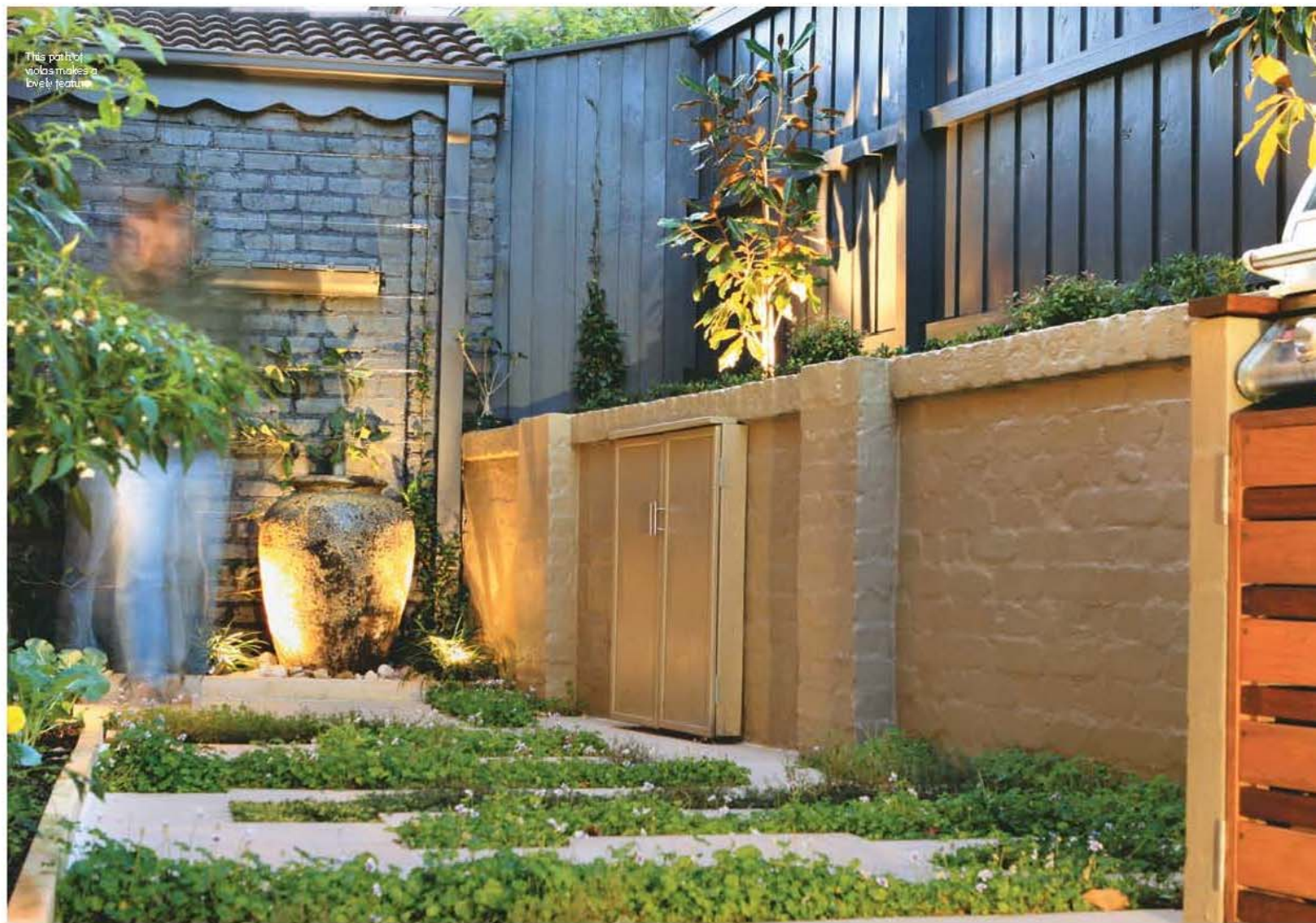




To take advantage of all surfaces, a passionfruit vine has been espaliered.



This portion of violas makes a lovely feature.

SMALL & SAVVY

A petite garden proves that fresh produce can be grown anywhere

Words: Rachel Talbot | Photos: Anna Todd

If you have a small inner-city garden or courtyard, you may be thinking that a flourishing vegetable garden is out of reach. However, as this garden shows, space need not be a hindrance and an attractive and productive garden can go hand in hand — and even incorporate a bar feature, a barbecue, seating area and ornamental plants.

When the owners of this garden approached Steve Warner of Outhouse

Design, they had a clear design brief. They wanted a functional space that would suit the family, which includes young children, with a productive vegetable garden as well as an attractive outdoor entertaining area. The site was the challenge, however, as it was a petite size of only 10m x 3m, so space maximisation was a key issue.

"Because of the restrictions that the small size introduced, it was important to utilise the vertical space: 1.8m steel spirals

serve as trellises for peas and runner beans and also provide a decorative element, and the dwarf apple tree is espaliered against the north-facing wall, which also serves to screen the washing line," explains Steve. "We made sure the vegetable bed enjoyed a full-sun position, which worked in our favour, as we could then have the seating in the more protected area of the garden."

The owners had the decision of what edible plants were to be included in the garden. They chose veggies and herbs that they often cook with, including spinach, lettuce, chilli and rosemary among other edibles, which are rotated as the seasons change.

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Broccoli, lettuce and herbs are just some of the edibles that can be grown in this garden.

DEN PROFILE

Herbs and vegies are rotated as the seasons change.



This space-savvy built-in barbecue and bench seat area makes great use of the available space.

This garden shows how a courtyard or small garden can be used to grow fresh, healthy vegies, fruits and herbs.



"We used companion planting, such as marigolds, which work as a great natural pest deterrent and provide a colourful, cheery addition that the children love," says Steve.

Cleverly, the Outhouse Design team introduced edible plants, such as thyme, to do double-duty and provide a decorative element as border planting as well as between the pavers. "This allowed us to break up the hard paving area and support the additional 'softscape' for water penetration. We wanted a combination of vegetables and herbs that the family would cook with regularly and

those that provided interest and were educational for the children," says Steve.

The vegetable bed's location close to the kitchen means the children can easily see the growing process happening before their eyes — from seed to plate, growing, harvesting and cooking their produce. The proximity to the cooking area of the home also means the produce is likely to be used and will encourage experimentation with herbs and vegies when creating culinary masterpieces in the kitchen.

The vegetable garden is edged with sandstone, which helps unify the space,

tying in with the sandstone paving used as flooring. The bed was filled with an organic mix and is regularly fertilised with the castings from the worm farm to encourage healthy production of food and well-draining soil.

The colour scheme, layout and ornamental features create a classic design, but the garden as a whole has a strong functional element. The key design features are the vegetable garden; the water feature, which cools the space; the barbecue and seating area, which includes built-in storage as an ingenious space-saving element; and lighting that ensures

the garden can be used at night during the warmer months.

"Sustainability was a key concept driving the design," says Steve. "Where possible existing materials were incorporated into the new design, or recycled. The worm farm uses organic matter that would otherwise be going to landfill and also provides a natural fertiliser for the garden. The layout utilises passive solar design principles."

This garden proves that with a clever design, even the smallest space can be used to produce fresh, healthy fruit and vegies. ■