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HOME



OUR COLOURFUL
summer
issue

breathhtaking rooftop garden

Hidden over 25 floors above the city, this green, sculptured garden sits amongst skyscrapers. Matthew Cantwell director of Secret Gardens of Sydney, gives *Adore Home* a tour of this gorgeous rooftop garden.

Where is this rooftop garden?

The rooftop garden is located on the 25th floor of an apartment building in Sydney. It has panoramic views of the city, harbour and all the way up Parramatta river. It is surrounded by skyscrapers so it does feel like a garden in the sky.

What was the inspiration behind the design of this rooftop garden?

To create a simple, formal garden that did not obstruct the view. The original garden had tall hedges which obstructed the view when you were sitting inside the apartment. The client enjoys a formal style of garden but also wanted it to be whimsical as well.

What feature do you love most about this garden?

That you can create a garden like this in the middle of a city. It inspires you to think how the city would look if everyone in apartments did a similar thing. How different would the city look from the sky!

Other factors I like are the simplicity and elegance of the garden. The geometric lines that the garden creates on the balcony make it really interesting. The outdoor seating provides a place to sit and enjoy the

garden and the view.

Were there any obstacles/problems that you came up against when designing this space and how did you overcome them?

We had completed a project in the penthouse of the same building 12 months prior so we were familiar with the building management which was an advantage. All materials had to be brought up through the lift and assembled on the balcony. Potting mix, mulch, plants – you name it, it all travelled in the lift.

Working at such a height requires stringent safety requirements. ▶



ROOFTOP VIEWS:
This amazing rooftop garden in Sydney overlooks the Sydney Harbour and infamous Sydney Harbour Bridge.

**PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON BUSCH
STYLING BY PAUL HOPPER**

outdoor living feature

Particular care had to be taken to ensure everything was secured, for example the carpenter could not leave nails lying around because if a nail was blown off the balcony at this height it could be very dangerous.

Weight-bearing is a major consideration when designing gardens in apartments and on rooftops. Materials have to be light-weight and waterproofing is also an issue. All of these factors were part of the design process.

It is also an area where it is exposed to weather at its extreme. High winds, western sun – so the plants had to be able to survive these conditions. Artificial turf or smart grass was installed to allow the feeling of grass but ensuring it would also look good all year around and not require the water and maintenance that grass requires.

Which plants are your favourite to use in the summer and why?

There are certain plants that always remind me of summer. One of my favourites is the frangipani – watching them come into leaf and being able to enjoy the flowers for such a long period just makes it feel like summer. They come in so many varieties but my favourite is still the most common white one.

Other favourites include bougainvillea for its vibrancy of colour. You usually see these grown over garden structures but an interesting way to use these is to sit it in a low bowl style pot and let it spill over the edge – keep it trimmed for its shape. In this format they can add colour and interest to a balcony or an outdoor area. Star jasmine is always a popular choice – it can make a boring old side passage transformed when it is grown over wire to cover an entire fence. And the beautiful scent is a bonus. ■



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Matthew Cantwell's tips

Director of Secret Gardens of Sydney, Matthew Cantwell gives *Adore Home* his top tips to recreating this gorgeous rooftop garden.

You can re-create this space in a courtyard or an open area. You do need the space to get the effect so look at your area and try and visualise how you want it to look.

Before you plant anything you should draw a plan and decide where plants will be placed. This garden is both masculine with the geometric lines of the buxus hedging and cones but has been given a femininity with the use of Italian lavender, moraea or wedding lily and rosemary. This is a more Italian style of formal garden and adds interest.

Select some plants for your formal hedging and to create the line you are after in the garden and then add some softening plants that will add colour variation and flowers throughout the year.

If you do not have the space or the conditions for grass to survive use artificial turf.

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