

by my side

Don't overlook a great way to add character to your home. Here's how to create inviting side paths that welcome guests WORDS ROBIN POWELL

Too often side gardens are design afterthoughts, the area in which the clothes line, air-con unit, bins and worm farm gather in unloved companionship. But with a fresh eye, the side passage can be seen as integral to the garden, offering unique opportunities for invitation, exploration, beauty and privacy. It's also a pathway, a link between one part of the garden and another. The materials chosen for the pathway should complement the design of the whole garden, while the planting needs to fit the conditions, which are often deep shade, sometimes with the added challenge of being part undercover. Privacy needs consideration and can be dealt with using plants or construction. Finally, consider lighting up the area at night with lights angled into the garden so that a reflected glow illuminates the way and encourages wandering.



PHOTOGRAPHY: NICHOLAS WATT

smart casual Matthew Cantwell, Secret Gardens

Sydney designer Matthew Cantwell of Secret Gardens (secretgardens.com.au) thinks knocking on the front door is for formal visits. When people come over, he says, it's much friendlier to be able to tell them to come straight around the back. However, for that to happen there needs to be a welcoming path that links the front with the rear. Here, concrete pavers make a defined but soft connecting path from the front gate out into the back entrance. On the northern side, where the property is overlooked by the neighbours' house, slender weaver bamboo and *Strelitzia nicolai* (bird of paradise) offer privacy within a garden bed that is only 1.5 metres wide. At ground level, bromeliads offer year-round colour, augmented by seasonal colour splashes from Heliconia 'Christmas Cheer' and Brazilian walking iris.

Tip: Bamboo and bird of paradise need to be trimmed to allow light in. Slender weaver can be thinned and pruned, and the old thick trunks of the *Strelitzia nicolai* need to be removed to allow fresh new growth.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

water play

Plan a tropical escape without having to step outside – a lush indoor oasis means you can enjoy your own slice of paradise

WORDS LYNNE TESTONI PHOTOGRAPHY NICHOLAS WATT

1/ Tropical plants For a lush atmosphere, you can't go past hardy plants that will cope well with the moisture of pool areas. This indoor courtyard garden was designed by landscape designer Simon Howard of Secret Gardens (secretgardens.com.au), who chose the long leafy form of *Philodendron cannifolium* (flask philodendron) to set the scene and provide a frame of greenery next to the barbecue area. **Try garden centres such as Flower Power, which sells philodendron for \$39.99/250mm pot, flowerpower.com.au.**

2/ Barbecue area The custom-made timber and stainless-steel barbecue unit with rangehood was designed by Secret Gardens and fabricated by Art Of Kitchens. Large wall mirrors behind enhance the sense of space in the area. **Similar barbecue and servery units can be created from \$16,000 (including rangehood) by Art Of Kitchens, artofkitchens.com.au.**

3/ Lounge chair A feature furniture piece continues the outdoor living theme. This teak and leather lounge chair by Gloster has a Scandi sensibility and its inviting curves make it ideal for relaxing with a cocktail or book. **Gloster 'Dansk' lounge chair, \$2268, Cosh Living, coshliving.com.au.**

4/ Hanging plants To offer a point of difference to the large plants around the pool, Simon has chosen smaller hanging plants to add another dimension to the garden. The fine tendrils of this *Rhipsalis baccifera* (mistletoe cactus) offer a counterbalance to the fig below. **Try mistletoe cactus, from \$18.94/130mm pot, Bunnings Warehouse, bunnings.com.au.**

5/ Fiddle leaf fig The *Ficus lyrata* is the plant *du jour*, and works well confined to a pot. Here, its large curved leaves provide an anchor point for the

other plants. **Fiddle leaf figs can be hard to find, due to their popularity. Try Garden Life for figs ranging from \$60/200mm pot and 50cm high to a two metre-high plant from \$550, gardenlife.com.au.**

6/ Concrete planters While they may be expensive, cement pots are long-lasting and age well. Choose a variety of sizes with similar profiles and cluster together in odd numbers for an informal look. **Consider the 'Essential' range, from \$95/400mm x 420mm pot in the 'Cone' series, Garden Life, as before.**

7/ Variegated plants A good way of adding depth of colour and variety in mixed plantings without the distraction of bright florals is to go with variegated foliage. Simon chose easy-care species for the pool surround, including *Sansevieria trifasciata* (Mother In Law's tongue) which is ideally suited to pots. **Try *Sansevieria trifasciata*, \$99/250mm pot, Flower Power, as before.**

8/ Pavers Granite combines practicality and beauty as a pool surround. These low-maintenance mottled pavers are made from Torino granite, a premium blue grey material from Italy. Here, they've been sealed and look stunning by the poolside and as a feature floor in the surrounding garden area. The pavers have a smooth texture underfoot. **'Torino' granite pavers, from \$130/sqm, Eco Outdoor, ecooutdoor.com.au.**

9/ Mosaic tiles A perfect choice for pools, mosaic tiles are available in a variety of rich colours and are generally non-slip due to the amount of grout needed. Glass versions in particular add a touch of iridescence and the deep blue of these designs create a resort-style mood in this internal courtyard. **Try Bisazza 'Palma' glass mosaic tiles, \$133/sqm, Perini Tiles, perini.com.au.**

the tally

Philodendron	\$40
Barbecue unit	\$16,000
Lounge chair	\$2268
<i>Rhipsalis baccifera</i>	\$19
Fiddle leaf fig	\$550
Concrete planters	\$875
<i>Sansevieria trifasciata</i>	\$99
Pavers	\$1300
Mosaic tiles	\$2660
TOTAL	\$23,811*

*PRICES MAY VARY ON APPLICATION. LOOK INTO YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL REGULATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS BEFORE STARTING ANY RENOVATION WORK

