

AUSTRALIAN *TEXTURAL HEALING:* Decorating is the best therapy!

# HOUSE & GARDEN

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GARDENING IS STILL ON!  
Chic, petite and green - five small gardens to inspire



# LET IT *shine*

A beautiful garden can be the quiet achiever that helps to unify a multifaceted home.

Old neatly dovetails with new at this Sydney property, thanks to a sympathetic modern addition to the original 1890s-era home. But the garden, too, plays an important role in blending the two architectural eras.

As soon as they launched into renovations, the homeowners realised they wanted the garden to sing in tune with the home. They engaged Secret Gardens early on in the process to devise a garden for the front, western side entrance and the rear. Secret Gardens' managing director, Matt Cantwell (pictured) worked closely with the

architect and builder throughout the project - and the house and garden reached completion at the same time.

The owners' brief to Matt was twofold: they wanted a low-maintenance garden and a design that reflected the home's architectural narrative. "They wanted a style of garden that would be kind to the history of the home, but that would also recognise the modern addition," says Matt.

The front and side gardens were tiny spaces that required careful solutions. Out the front, where the facade meets the street, Matt designed a 5m long, 60cm wide ▶



The front garden (this page and opposite) is simple and restrained, reflecting the architecture of the heritage facade, and consists of a row of *Kalanchoe* 'Silver Spoons' in front of a row of coniferous *Cephalotaxus harringtonia*. Growing on the verge is a lilly pillly, *Syzygium luehmannii*.



brick 'planter', filling it with *Kalanchoe* 'Silver Spoons' layered in front of a row of *Cephalotaxus harringtonia*. The effect is restrained and linear, in keeping with the architecture. "These two plant varieties fitted the brief – both modern and classic," says Matt.

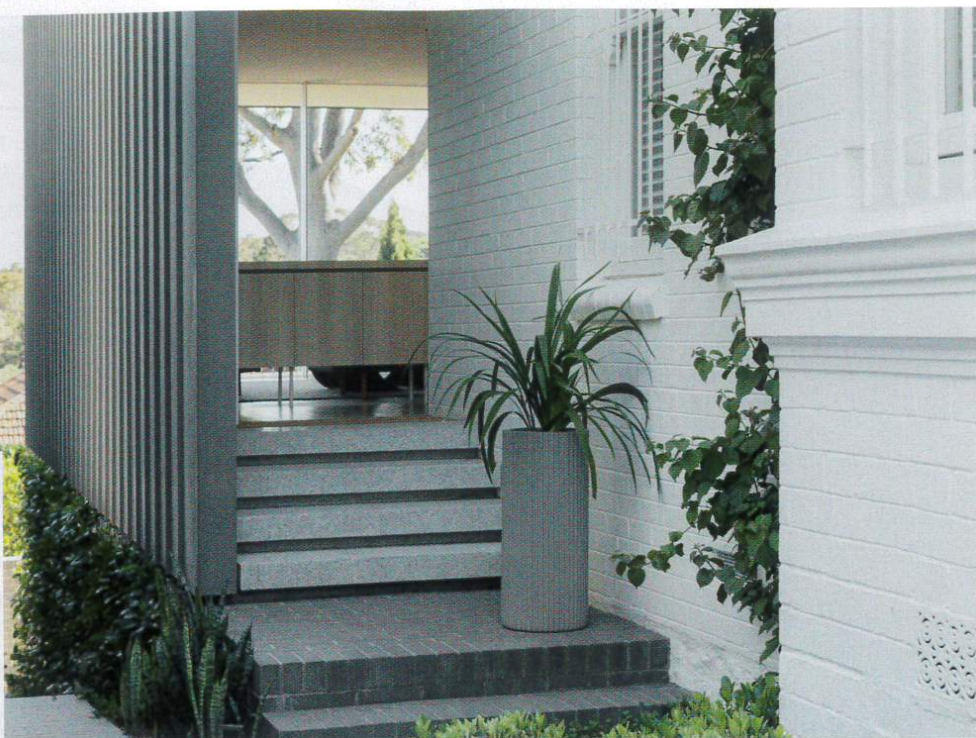
The side garden, measuring 3m wide and 9m long, is located on the western side of the house so receives a lot of afternoon sun. "The plants needed to be tough here," says Matt. They include a groundcover of *Dichondra repens*, hedging of *Rhaphiolepis* 'Oriental Pearl' and *Bougainvillea* 'Scarlet O'Hara' climbing the walls.

'Simple' was the key word in the brief for the 200m<sup>2</sup> rear garden, where a new pool is offset with generous green space. "The clients wanted a large lawn area, not just for children to play on but to enable the architecture to shine," says Matt. It's an open, north-facing space, with a mature eucalypt casting dappled light over it for much of the day. Matt chose King's Pride soft-leaf buffalo grass for the lawn. "It's durable, hard-wearing and sun and shade tolerant," he says. The lawn is framed with a hedge of bay (*Laurus nobilis* 'Miles Choice'). Alongside the pool he planted a row of *Philodendron* 'Xanadu'.

Matt chose Madagascan jasmine (*Stephanotis floribunda*) to bring greenery to the outdoor dining area. The jasmine is trained to climb a series of stainless-steel wires, creating a beautiful evergreen curtain around the dining table.

"The layout of the house is simple and clean, no clutter, no unnecessary details," says Matt. And he has perfectly echoed that sentiment in the garden.

[www.secretgardens.com.au](http://www.secretgardens.com.au)



"THE BRIEF CALLED FOR A COMBINATION OF CLASSIC AND MODERN ELEMENTS. LESS WAS ALWAYS GOING TO BE MORE IN THIS GARDEN."  
MATT CANTWELL



**TOP AND ABOVE LEFT** Hardy plants were needed for the side garden; these include *Rhaphiolepis* 'Oriental Pearl', *Dichondra repens* and bougainvillea. A walking iris (*Neomarica gracilis*) is planted in a tall ridged pot from Secret Gardens' new brand, Hibernate Outdoors. **ABOVE** Fan-leaved palm (*Livistona chinensis*). Pot, Hibernate Outdoors. **OPPOSITE TOP** "We used Madagascan jasmine to create a filtered screen," says Matt. "It's so lovely when the sun passes through the foliage and the scent is heavenly." **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM LEFT** A potted dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*) adds poolside drama. **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT** The simple garden design allows the architecture to shine.



#### GRAND PLAN

A small outdoor space requires big ideas. "People tend to think small and add too much detail, rather than keeping it simple," says Matt Cantwell from Secret Gardens. Here, Matt shares his key tips for compact gardens:

- ✦ Think big: rather than lots of bits and pieces of greenery, choose a singular, super-advanced tree that will not outgrow the space.
- ✦ Declutter: it's easy to collect pots but in a small space it can look untidy. One large pot can look far better. The less clutter, the more impact.
- ✦ Don't be afraid to pave the area with a large format tile or paver. It will make it easier on the eye and make the space feel larger.
- ✦ Make sure your outdoor furniture complements and doesn't repeat the indoor furniture. There's no point having two dining tables adjacent to each other.

