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CLASSIFIED
MATERIAL

Our bookcase edit

OSLO'S
NORDIC COOL

*London's design
nirvana*

GLAM
GIFTS

FOR DESIGN FIENDS

ADAM GOODRUM'S
Champagne days

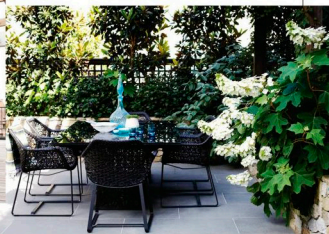
Serene
SUMMER





Leafing home

Matt Cantwell of Secret Gardens is reshaping backyards into blissful oases.



WERE YOU ALWAYS INTERESTED IN LANDSCAPE DESIGN? My parents divorced when I was seven and my mother moved to England. I would visit for lengthy stays and saw many gardens with her and also learnt a lot about architecture. My father was a builder, and I earned pocket money, not just on his projects but building a large garden at home.

HOW DID YOUR BUSINESS START? I gained my design qualifications while working in landscaping. I saw a real opportunity to design and construct gardens. So Secret Gardens was born. I got my name out there doing letter drops and the work flowed from there.

WHAT INSPIRES YOUR DESIGN? As I get older I feel my gardens are getting simpler. What really excites me are the plants. The best designs have the right balance between the horticultural and the structural. Plants make a garden special, not garden bling.

FAVOURITE GARDENS IN THE WORLD? Last year I visited Katsura Imperial Villa in Kyoto, which left a strong impression on me. The simplicity of the interiors and the connection to the gardens was inspiring. I also love Central Park in New York. It highlights the value of green spaces to our wellbeing.

DO YOU HAVE A SIGNATURE LOOK? Sydney's landscape varies dramatically as do plot sizes and architectural styles. So, we need to be flexible. I hope our gardens provide facility and space as well as interest, privacy and intimacy from a strong planting scheme.

THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING IN SYDNEY? There is still a part of the market that undervalues simple, refined design with the emphasis on planting. We encourage clients to embrace the opportunities that great planting can provide, such as privacy and shade.

FAVOURITE PROJECT? My own garden, definitely. It has many design highlights and connects wonderfully with our living areas.

YOUR ADVICE FOR GARDEN PLANNING? Less is more [3].

FAVOURITE PLANTS? A happy plant, and the right plant for the right spot. I love the foliage of *Euphorbia wulfenii*.

FAVOURITE FLOWERS? Those you can cut and enjoy inside or give to friends, such as the oak leaf hydrangea [2].

DESCRIBE YOUR PERFECT GARDEN? Private, shaded and perfect for lunch with friends [5].

ITEMS FOR THE GARDEN/TERRACE YOU WOULD BUY NOW? Atelier Vierkant handmade planters [1] from Cosh Living, a piece by English sculptor John O'Connor, a 'Plantation Cantilever' umbrella [6] by Tuuci, 'Bollyhood' tandoor and pizza oven by Robert Plumb [4], Royal Botania 'Zenhit' outdoor lounge chair [7].

PROJECTS ON THE DRAWING BOARD? We are renovating a large garden at a beautiful property 'Kalua' in Palm Beach, and another project in Palm Beach with Jorge Hrdina Architects.

For more go to secretgardens.com.au