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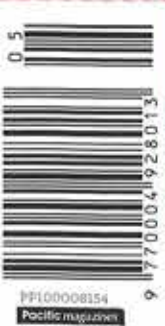
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GARDEN PROFILE:

HARBOUR LIFE

MATTHEW CANTWELL OF SECRET GARDENS
SHARES THE DESIGN SECRETS OF THIS STRIKING
ZONE IN AN EXTRACT FROM HIS NEW BOOK

PHOTOGRAPHY NICHOLAS WATT



THIS STUNNING HOME OCCUPIES an enviable site fronting Sydney Harbour with commanding views across the water to the Harbour Bridge. We were engaged early in the build and it was the first project we worked on with Bruce Stafford Architects, a relationship that has continued to develop in the years following. It was a typical harbour-front property, reasonably steep, with the top floor presenting at street level and the lowest of the three levels connecting directly to the water level. Across much of the site our brief initially was to ensure the provision of appropriate planter beds and of course the planting itself. Our clients wanted a low-maintenance garden capable of withstanding the hot western sun and the windy conditions on the waterfront. As always, boundary screening and planting was a priority. >

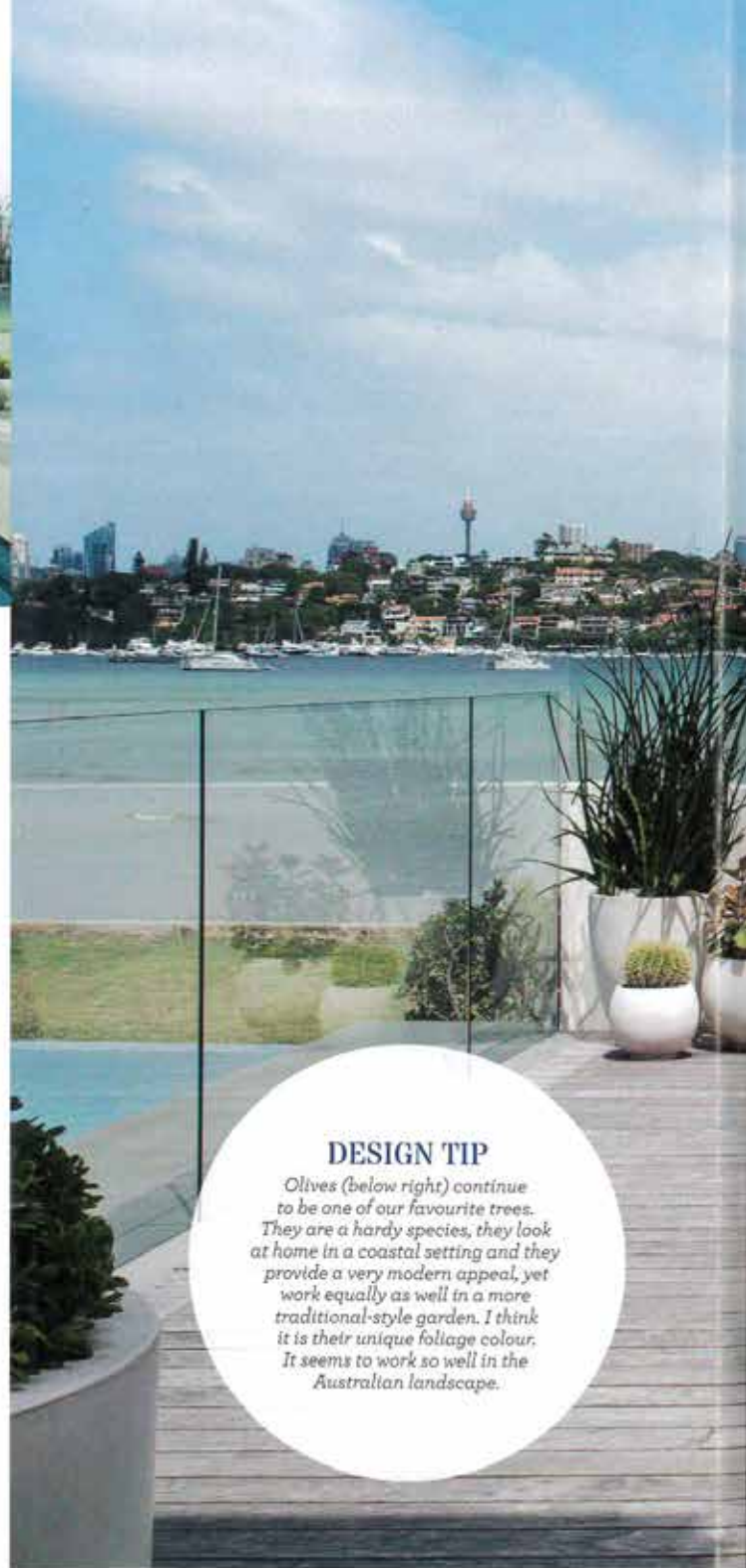
“A motorised awning is a very flexible solution. The priority was to ensure that it could disappear completely when not required, and for the sky to be enjoyed” ~ Matthew Cantwell

courtyard A freestanding lounge setting (opposite) provided a destination point and an opportunity to sit outside, protected from the exposed area fronting the water. Philodendron, walking iris, blue chalk sticks, liriopse, westringia and zoysia were planted to conceal the framework of the green wall around the mirrored water feature. Behind the green wall and designed into the finish of the cladding to the boundary block wall are soundproof panels.

deck On the timber deck adjacent to the pool (above), planters were arranged and planted with hardy architectural plants to create a simple and striking balance with the structural finishes and furniture selections.

barbecue A built-in barbecue (right) and generous banquette seating were added to improve entertaining facilities and maximise the seating options without impinging on the zone's footprint.





DESIGN TIP

Olives (below right) continue to be one of our favourite trees. They are a hardy species, they look at home in a coastal setting and they provide a very modern appeal, yet work equally as well in a more traditional-style garden. I think it is their unique foliage colour. It seems to work so well in the Australian landscape.

An area of the garden that turned out to be one of the highlights of the property was an internal courtyard. We had two opportunities to design this space. Initially we designed the courtyard to include a large, mirrored water wall against a large expanse of white rendered wall, to be enjoyed from numerous aspects. At the base of the water feature the bold foliage of *Alcantarea extensa* was used to provide additional appeal. When first completed, a mature fig in the neighbouring garden provided ample screening and shade. This tree though was earmarked for removal, so forced the need to rethink this area. Having lived with the new home for some years by now, it became apparent just how important this courtyard space was.

Preparing for the fig's removal, we designed a large boundary wall with a built-in planter perched above to address what would become a privacy issue. A green wall surrounded the water feature, covering the previously white walls. An acoustic engineer was engaged to help alleviate the echo that sometimes ricocheted around the courtyard due to background noise, and a motorised awning then covered the space to protect the area from midday sun and light rain. The new design transformed the space, creating a central hub for this home.

entrance *The side entrance on the southern side of the residence was planted with a mass of *Alpinia nutans* that climbed the entire length of the imposing staircase connecting to street level (above left). This created a lush entrance that came alive with the wind, a subtle reward that was further enhanced by a neighbouring willow myrtle, delicately draping overhead.*

pool zone *The pool was oriented to provide an uninterrupted view to the Harbour Bridge when swimming (top left). A raised timber deck (above) ensured time spent in the sun loungers was enhanced by a view of the harbour, yet still private from the passers-by who walked along the water's edge.*

plantings *On the southern side of the property, at water level, which was most exposed to neighbours, a row of olives was used to provide screening (opposite). These were underplanted with a hedge of *Rhaphiolepis intermedia* against the boundary, clipped rosemary, carissa and the ever-reliable agave, a plant usually relied on for its durability in full sun, but quite at home in the shade, where it takes on a softer, fresher appeal. **HB***

"When designing a garden, it is important to consider neighbouring vegetation and the opportunity it can offer to borrow from the scenery" ~ Matthew Cantwell



SECRET GARDENS

(New Holland Publishers, \$59.99) is the title of the award-winning landscape design company's new book. Founding director Matthew Cantwell shares some of the firm's favourite projects, revealing how each garden came to life. On sale now.

