

SMALL SPACES: WALLS, COURTYARDS, POTS



Gardening AUSTRALIA



TV show
6.30pm
Saturday

August 2016



6 PRACTICAL PROJECTS:

- Grow melons on an A-frame
- Make a terrarium
- Plant a patterned flower bed
- 3 achievable green walls made from crates, pots & bottles

Josh Byrne
Sheep & other shenanigans in a student rental

The only way is up!

Learn how to garden on the vertical plane



66 9\$ X1NO

PLUS: HOW TO PRUNE CITRUS • GREAT IDEAS IN A SUNNY COURTYARD • THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF AIR PLANTS

Success in a SMALL

SPACE



words JOHN PATRICK photography STEPHEN READ

Clever design ideas and a clear vision have transformed this small suburban garden into a beautiful, lush space with lovely spots to sit, and enticing sight lines that integrate the garden with the house



Stephen Read, a young garden designer based at Macedon, north-west of Melbourne, was commissioned to transform this small north-facing courtyard garden of lawn, camellias and rigid rows of roses into an altogether more charming and personal garden for its owner, Vicki van der Vene. For Vicki, the challenge was to distill the best features from the gardens of her childhood, as well as her grandparents' inner-city block and her parents' large suburban property in the Yarra Valley, into her modestly scaled block in Malvern.

Through careful manipulation of spaces and a canny selection of finishes, Stephen and Vicki have created a wonderful setting for family life, and for the much-loved dogs, who luxuriate in the warmth of the courtyard. The house and garden have been successfully integrated, and a close look at how they've done it provides clues for other gardeners working with small spaces.

walk this way

The axial garden space occupies the side of the house, where granitic sand offers an appropriate low-cost paving solution. Informal steppers carry traffic while also leading the eye through the garden. The potted olive (*Olea europaea*), golden robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia') and honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* var. *inermis* 'Rubylace') provide a great diversity of foliage and underline the important it is to choose trees that are appropriate for small spaces. All three have delicate, fine foliage that does not overfill the space, but still provides delightful dappled shade.

PHOTO ALICIA TAYLOR

it's a dog's life

Frog, the French Bulldog, surveys his territory. It is not always easy to combine dogs with gardens, but one way is to use really robust plants and allow dogs to have movement through them. Another trick is to raise your fragile treasures in pots. Here, the arrangement of pots and water feature adds a classic touch, and the small space is expanded visually through the clever placement of the mirror in the background.

greys & greens

Choosing plants appropriate to the site's ecology is the best recipe for a successful garden, and this courtyard has full north sun - warm, bright and dry. Potted olives, *Euphorbia characias* subsp. *wulfenii* and common culinary sage (*Salvia officinalis*) feature the kind of grey foliage typical of plants demanding hot, sunny positions. They offer a strong, cool background for contrasting colours, such as reds and pinks, or the yellow-green of the golden robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia') reflected in the distant mirror.



"Choosing plants appropriate to the site's ecology is the best recipe for a successful garden"



FINE FOLIAGE
Right The garden has many plants with interesting foliage, such as this lovely variegated canna lily.





POTTED HERBS
Left Any number of containers can be brought into service for the cultivation of herbs in a small garden.

inside out

Visible from the living areas, the garden functions as an extra 'room'. In Australia, even in winter, there are days when outside is the only place to be. An outdoor room such as this becomes a space to share with family and friends, or simply a place to sit and shell peas, read a book or slowly imbibe a gin and tonic. Here, water offers a lively focus, capturing sunlight and inviting the viewer outdoors. The use of lattice as an extension to the fence almost removes the house next door, while the bougainvillea running its length is the same colour as the one around the side, providing continuity and unity. Against this, there is sufficient variety in planting to please and entertain the eye, whether in the diverse forms of containers chosen for raised planting, or in the textures of plants such as New Zealand flax, *Miscanthus* spp. and *Sedum* spp.

on reflection

Vicki is constantly pottering about in the garden, so having a working space for potting, re-potting, nursing and reviving plants was an essential part of the brief. The division of spaces within a small garden provides an opportunity to screen intrusive elements, though the garden can continue into the space as an axis. Here, two simple wooden frames carry wires for evergreen climbing plants, while a mirror, its edges softened by the foliage of climbing fig (*Ficus pumila*) and by flower-filled pots at its base, reflects the main axis of the garden to create an impression of greater size. It does the trick – visitors often ask how they can get to the other part of the garden, when it's a reflection of the area they are standing in!



out of the blue

Every now and again, there's an opportunity to make a statement. This turquoise glazed pedestal urn marks the corner where the rear courtyard turns into the front axial garden. Nobody could miss the change in mood here!



dappled shade

I've often thought that the shadow pattern beneath trees is undervalued in garden design. Choose the wrong tree and you can end up with dark, dreary shade, but choose an open tree – a jacaranda (*Jacaranda mimosifolia*), golden robinia (*Robinia pseudoacacia* 'Frisia') or honey locust (*Gleditsia triacanthos* var. *inermis* 'Rubylace'), for example – and you are assured delicate shade that's guaranteed to convert even the most everyday paving into a joy to behold. Here, the mass planting of renga lily (*Arthropodium cirratum*) along the left offers great groundcover in the dappled shade.



pave the way

In small spaces, it's tempting to invest in expensive paving. Stephen and Vicki have resisted that temptation, and here, gone with compacted granitic sand, which is low cost and makes a delightful, hard-wearing surface, with a dash of informality.



ON THE FENCE

Right Fences can be seen as opportunities to disguise boundaries and provide growing space. This bougainvillea provides an ebullient display of red bracts for at least eight months of the year.



Stephen and Vicki's garden will be open as part of Garden Design Fest, which runs November 12–13 and 19–20. More than 20 gardens in and around Melbourne will be open, with their designers on site. For more info, visit gardendesignfest.com.au



quirky touches

Vicki has carefully assembled planters of idiosyncratic design and filled them with succulents to give her garden a distinct character. Look out at markets, secondhand shops and rubbish collections for other people's junk that can become your treasure!



WIN!

2 garden tour tickets

Need more ideas?

Take part in Garden Design Fest! Australians Studying Abroad is offering two tickets to a guided tour on Saturday, November 12. It kicks off at John Patrick's house for a private viewing and morning tea, then takes in five more gardens in inner Melbourne. For your chance to win, tell us in 25 words or less what you'd most like to ask a designer. Email comp@gardeningaustralia.com.au with 'Garden Tour' in the subject line, or write your name, address and entry on the back of an envelope and send to 'Design Fest', Gardening Australia, nextmedia, Locked Bag 5555, St Leonards NSW 1590.

Competition starts 11/7/16 at 00:01 AEST and closes 14/8/16 at 23:59 AEST. The winner will be judged on 16/8/16 at 14:00 AEST. One winner will win two tickets to an Australians Studying Abroad tour on November 12. Total value of prize is \$350. No travel or other expenses are included.



Fleming's *Fabulous Fruit* Selection



Get yours growing this bare root season - order from your local Fleming's stockist:



flemings.com.au

or call 03 9756 6105