



INSTANT APPEAL

A lush lawn and elegant outdoor dining area give this bijou backyard instant appeal

Words: Justine Carlife
Photos: Patrick Redmond

design showcase

Delivering a landscape with all the features found in a large suburban garden is surely a challenge when the client presents the landscape designer with a small area at the rear of a terrace house. However, as this small backyard did face west there was plenty of natural light. There was also the opportunity to remodel the rear of the house so we could achieve a real sense of integration between the indoor living area and the new outdoor living area and landscape.

Large full-size sliding glass doors were installed across the rear of the house, opening the now light and airy living room to the outdoor dining area. This space is framed with a painted timber pergola which has an electrically operated lightweight retractable cover to provide protection from the hot midday sun and passing showers. Particular attention was given to ensuring the design of the ornate pergola was tastefully integrated with the house design.

At one end of the outdoor dining area is a thin hedge of the hardy evergreen box-leaved privet. At the other end, surrounding the gas barbecue, there is a high merbau timber screen wall which then wraps around the pergola posts to provide bench seating. Set in the timber seats is turf lily which provides a

blaze of purple flowers in the summer.

The area is paved in black granite and complemented by the grey tones of the resilient and attractive lightweight polished concrete outdoor dining table. A real advantage of the smaller property is the proximity of the outdoor dining area to the inside kitchen and internal dining area. This means this outdoor area will really become an extra and well-used room of the house, but with the advantage of being light, airy and wrapped in attractive foliage.

The dining area looks out over an expanse of drought-tolerant turf surrounded on three sides by bushy ficus which will grow to provide a tight, dense hedge that offers privacy and definition to the area. At the base of the ficus is NZ rock lily, which provides pleasant, low, strappy foliage and a great display of fine elevated white flowers in the spring. The use of mainly evergreen plant species in this garden has been a key factor in giving this garden interest throughout the year.

The prominent piece of sculpture in this landscape is a Corten steel light box with a floral theme. It is located at the end of the garden where it is bordered by two narrow ornamental pear trees with an underplanting of turf lily, which once again produces a blaze of purple flowers in the summer. The light



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box feature is multi-faceted in that during the day the Corten steel structure is a sculptured feature in its own right while at night it turns into a light feature prominently displaying the floral theme. What's more, this feature is on display every day and night and can be readily observed from the living area of the house, quickly drawing the eye to the attractive lush garden.

Feature lighting is an important part of this landscape with low-voltage lights set into the timber seats, on the timber wall and around the garden, and small spotlights strategically placed under the ornamental pear trees.

While the space available for this garden was limited, we were able to make the most of the space by considering the family's indoor and outdoor lifestyle needs and employing a well-thought-out palette of plants and materials. The result is a functional and attractive garden unconstrained by the site's size limitations. ■

Justine Carlile is a Melbourne-based landscape designer and founder of Justine Carlile Landscape Design.

