



# Winning style

A contemporary family garden that simply goes with the flow



With two lively young girls and a pair of rambunctious Border Collies to consider, the owners of this bayside Melbourne property needed a garden that could take the rough and tumble of family life.

When they approached Mark Browning of Cycas Landscape Design, they had two requests: they wanted a garden that would complement the architecture of the house and one that would be lifestyle-oriented. This meant lots of lawn in the backyard for the little ones, a spacious pool and spa, a shady place for entertaining and a tennis court (which is tucked into the rear of the property).

Says Tim Sprague of Kiama Landscapes & Paving, the company charged with giving physical form to the garden design: "The philosophy was to complement the house and bring the outside in through strong material selection. This was done by using rust-finished render, vertical and horizontal cedar slats, Hillview granite feature walling and limewash painted surfaces."

Different themes were developed for the various parts of the garden. Towards the rear of the property, the look is native woodland; outside the main bedroom the flavour is Oriental, while in the front garden the plantings are largely architectural with a sprinkling of coastal species yet all form part of a connected whole.

This sense of connectedness can be seen very clearly in the repeated use of hand-picked boulders and stone features. A water feature in the rear garden — a square pond with central quarried boulders — is the main

focal element that can be viewed through the house. This is mirrored by a matching boulder in the front garden, placed on the same axis.

Reinforcing the link between the internal and external areas of the home, a curved wall of recycled ironbark sleepers was constructed outside the music room, referencing the shape of a grand piano. The sleepers, which were chosen for their rustic look, were placed on the vertical, all the better to mimic the look of piano keys. The timber wall also references the cedar slats on the house.

A second curved wall, this one constructed of stone, wraps around the pool and extends into the surrounding garden and lawn. Its sinuous shape pays homage to the curved shape of the pool.

To add height and interest to an otherwise flat space, the spoil from the pool dig was used to fashion a grassy mound in the backyard. By subtly shaping the landform in this way, a second dwelling, nestled in the back corner, is kept independent from the rest of the garden.

As your eye follows the gentle rise and fall of the lawn or traces the tantalising curves of the sinuous stone walling, you can't help but be struck by the fluidity of the landscape design. And come nightfall, when the garden lighting comes into play, the effect is hypnotic.

Castlemaine slate in a random pattern was used to pave the area surrounding the pool, its casual look reinforcing the relaxed design of the remaining garden areas.





The soft landscaping incorporates many of the owners' favourite plants and is a mix of architectural and more conservative species. In the rear a single Chinese elm dominates the undulating expanse of lawn. Around the perimeter you will find olive plants, magnolias and She-oak with various native and exotic under-plantings.

For colour and textural interest, the piano garden features a mass of sago palms combined with *Cordyline* 'Red Sensation'.

In 2006, this garden won the Residential Landscape Construction — Over \$100,000 category in the Landscapes Industries Association of Victoria Awards of Excellence. In bestowing the award the judges commented that this was "an innovative landscape that complements the architectural flair of the dwelling".

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