



serenely statuesque

THIS MELBOURNE GARDEN IS STRIKING AND SENSIBLE IN EQUAL MEASURE

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THIS PIC The drive is edged with strikingly structural plants in tones of plum, rust and deep green.
BELOW Poa is a native grass that provides mounds of delicate foliage.

GRASS TREES MARCH WITH ELEGANCE AND DETERMINATION TOWARDS THE FRONT ENTRANCE



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inanutshell

What gives this garden its oomph?

- ✂ Mass plantings of mound- and fountain-forming plants.
- ✂ Low maintenance and drought-tolerant plantings that won't struggle with local conditions.
- ✂ Pebbles and river stones replacing grass in many areas to add

- extra depths of colour and texture and reduce garden maintenance.
- ✂ Deep grey and charcoal tones used in the steps, external house colours and water feature to contrast with the greens, blue-greys and plums of the plantings.
- ✂ Structural impact plants like grass trees, cycads, bamboo and cordyline.

SITUATED IN NORTH Balwyn, this garden, constructed by Klama Landscaping and Paving, packs a surprising punch. In an area where azaleas and camellias are to be found in abundance, the standout feature here is a mixture of hardy natives and exotics notable for their strong structural characteristics and abstemious water consumption. The resulting design has a striking native woodland feel with oriental overtones that is both visually commanding and serenely statuesque.

This is a confident garden that sweeps down the block towards the contemporary dwelling in a wave of blues, greys, greens and dusty purples. The impact of the planting relies on foliage form and hue rather than the flamboyance of flowers – in the juxtaposition of the bright green needle-like fountains of the grass trees against the broader, sturdy spade-like charms of *Strelitzia reginae* and the mottled cream and grey-brown of the *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* trunks.

The hard landscaping is substantial and unashamedly dramatic, playing to the pared-back qualities of many of the plant species used. Blue-grey stone steps flow down the slope in an orderly approximation of a bush site. Pebbles replace grass and any thought of a front lawn, while substantial sandstone boulders hold the garden beds gently in check, creating organic order and form while still allowing for the woodland effect. This feel is reinforced by the views of the parkland beyond the property, producing a sense of wider spaces in this conventional leafy suburban setting.



Individuality is the keynote here, from the determined modernity of the home, with its charcoal-painted walls, to the use of the grass trees that serve as structural planting elements, marching with elegance and determination towards the front entrance. Dramatic uplighting ensures they get more than a mere moment of recognition, transforming the xanthorrhoeas into living sculptures in the evening light.

fossilisedtrees

Repetition and diversity play against each other to produce an energising interplay. Mounding plant shapes – from the sharp cutting green of lomandra through to the more muted, feathery, greyish-blues of poa and the deep intensity of the slightly disordered fountains of *Phormium 'Purpureum'* – create a sense of fluid movement, softening and at the same time intensifying the impact of the quarried stone obelisks that manage to effectively suggest the ageless and stately presence of fossilised trees.

The sea of pebbles that replaces a conventional grass lawn reinforces this appeal, with the added attraction of requiring little in the way of watering and tending. The result is an intensely modern and yet timeless garden that uses plantings and hard landscaping elements to connect a private space to the adjacent environment.

Like all good gardens, this one not only speaks to the immediate surrounds, it flows into interior spaces. It doesn't offer itself up for immediate satisfaction, but produces its surprises in a timely manner. In the courtyard on the western side of the property, a pond with two Aludean stack water



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT This cordyline offers colour and structure; *Eucalyptus caesia* gumnuts; cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*) grows into stylish mounds of grey foliage; lighting enhances the impact of the grass trees; knobby club rush (*Isolepis nodosa*).



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fulsomefoliage

This garden is primarily about foliage, and choosing the right sort can make all the difference.

- ✂ For fountains of foliage grow liriop, poa, lomandra, *Festuca glauca* and phormium.
- ✂ For structural mounding plants try cycads (*Cycas revoluta*), bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*) and grass trees (*Xanthorrhoea australis*).
- ✂ For low hedging try coast rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa* or *W. glabra*). Trim to keep compact.
- ✂ For attractive, low-growing, bun-shaped plants choose cushion bush (*Leucophyta brownii*).
- ✂ For a combination of dark green, glossy foliage with velvety brown undersides try *Magnolia 'Little Gem'*.

- ✂ For plum-coloured foliage grow *Phormium 'Purpureum'*.
- ✂ For delicate, grassy grey-green foliage use *Poa labillardieri* or *Festuca glauca*.
- ✂ Try the contrast of the ebony stems of black bamboo (*Phyllostachys nigra*) with its light green foliage for an all-in-one hit. It looks wonderful grown against a charcoal grey, plum or hot pink wall.
- ✂ In native gardens grow the silver princess gum (*Eucalyptus caesia*) for its delicately weeping foliage, peeling red-brown bark and powdery grey gumnuts, or the yellow gum (*Eucalyptus leucoxylon 'Rosea'*) for its smoothly mottled blue, cream and grey bark and its enchanting and substantial pink flowers.



features surrounded by pebbles and plantings of cycads and grassy poas catches the eye, its clean-cut modernity and architectural style in stark contrast to another small courtyard opening from the family room on the eastern side of the home.

This second space is redolent with a sense of the orient, complete with maples, a stand of *Magnolia* 'Little Gem' and the elegance and soft patterning of light and shade created by bamboo. Here there is contrast between small pebbles and the mottled pink, cream and brown of larger river-smoothed stones, and between the lime green lace of maple leaves and the more substantial deep green glossiness and rusty undersides of the magnolia leaves. The delicate filigree of maple foliage shows to great advantage against another charcoal-painted wall, the whole area a green-filled pool of tranquillity and restful retreat.

light maintenance

There is an eternal aesthetic about this garden – it will survive without too much water and very little in the way of maintenance. Dead leaves will need to be removed and the fountains of grass cut back as they begin to die down. Fallen foliage and flaking bark from the eucalypts may need to be gathered and the occasional uninvited weed removed from amongst the pebbles. The sandstone will weather and age, grasses will seed and grow, the maples will lose their leaves only to be covered in a bright green froth next season, and the westringias will appreciate the occasional light trim to keep them compact. Surely not too onerous a commitment for such an attractive space.

THE DELICATE FILIGREE OF MAPLE FOLIAGE SHOWS TO GREAT ADVANTAGE AGAINST A CHARCOAL WALL



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE Japanese maples and *Magnolia* 'Little Gem' help create a tranquil oasis on the eastern side of the home; the Aludean stack water features add impact; timeless and everlasting, these quarried stone monoliths are reminiscent of fossilised trees in an ancient forest.

borrowed beauty

Landscapers and gardening magazines often talk about "borrowed" landscapes. This simply means designing your garden to take advantage of existing views and established plantings beyond your own boundary. This works best if a hedge, shrubbery or garden bed hides fences and the like. Incorporating the view beyond your garden creates a perception of unity with the broader environment. This garden has been designed to capitalise on neighbouring parkland.

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