

entertaining

outdoor

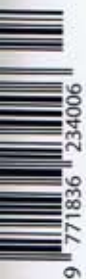
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The good life

A garden designed to let you enjoy the good things in life: good company and good food

Words: Richard Bellemo
Photos: Patrick Redmond





The owners of this home in one of Melbourne's leafiest suburbs wanted a backyard that resembled a resort in some exotic part of the globe so they could feel like life was one continual holiday. In keeping with the resort theme, they asked for an area for relaxation where they could wind down after an evening of entertaining, read a book or just fall asleep. As they love nothing more than to entertain friends and cook up a storm outside, we needed to cater for that, too, not to mention their passion for colour, especially orange and red.

Armed with this brief, I was able to create a suburban oasis, one that draws you in and bedazzles. It is ideal for relaxing and entertaining and is filled with colour and the sound of water — just what the owners wanted. Fashioning such a vibrant garden, however, one in which existing elements were successfully integrated with the new, required the use of complex design solutions and a range of subtle materials.

The backyard is approached via the side of the house. As soon as you set foot into the rear garden your eye is immediately drawn to the three large cascades at the back of the property, a stunning feature which can also be seen from the alfresco room. These cascades plummet down a living Corten wall into a large pond that catches the property's stormwater. Water collected off the roof is stored in 10,000-litre tanks behind a screen of recycled wood.

The alfresco entertaining area is 35sqm and connected to the house by a wooden arbour. It is a unique area designed for cooking and dining that has been built using recycled and plantation-grown Australian timbers and features an intricate exposed beam ceiling.

Location was the key. It feels like a separate room yet is still close enough to the house to allow quick access to the conveniences located inside. The floor is made of spotted



gum with blackbutt posts, hardwood beams and Tasmanian oak lining boards. Off-cuts from the Corten panels have been used as plates in its construction, while curved cedar shingles adorn its roof. With a built-in barbecue and sink, bluestone benchtops, cupboards and drawers, it makes entertaining easy.

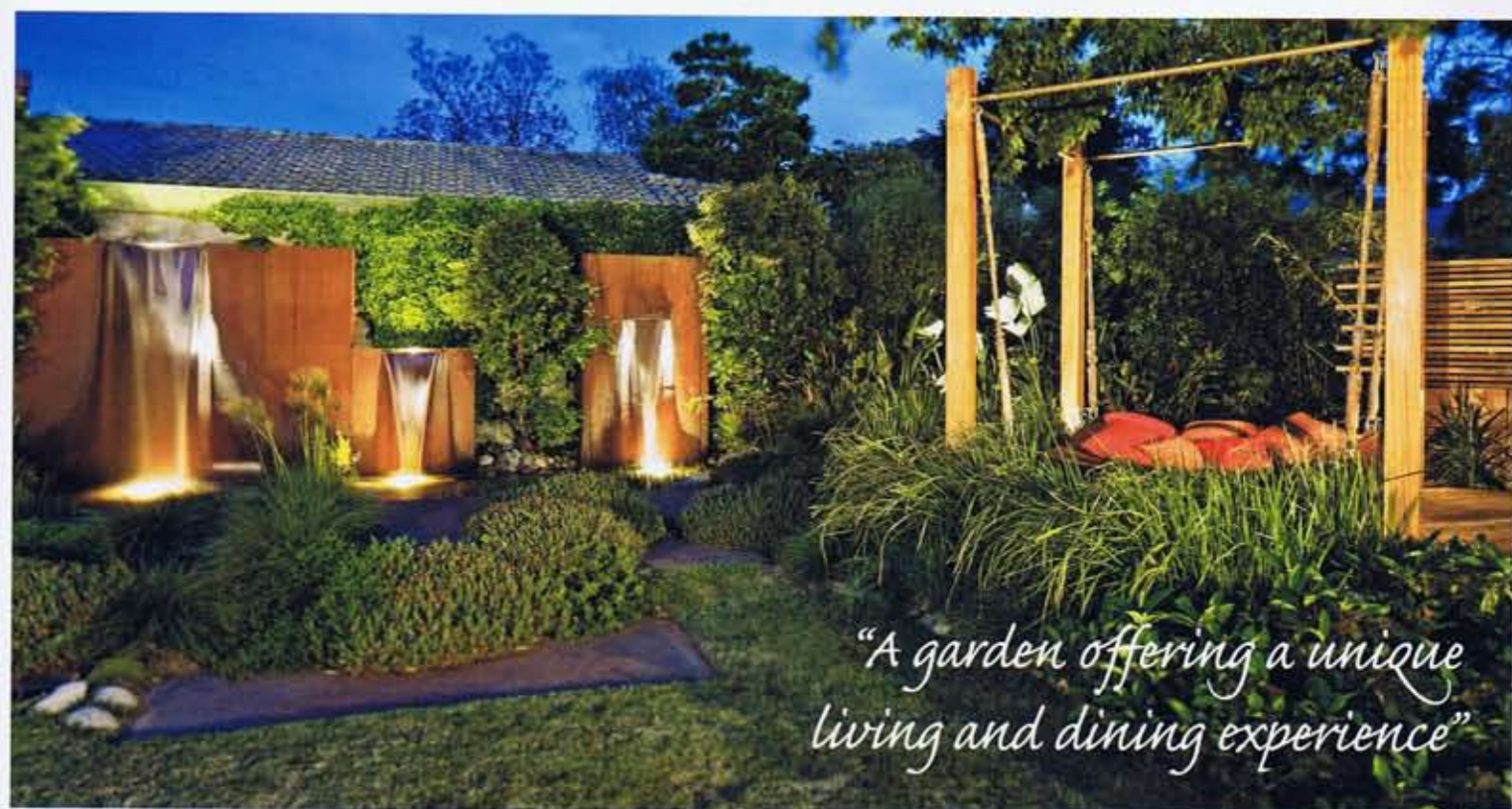
Lighting in the alfresco room and garden has been strategically placed to create the perfect mood under the fall of darkness. While enjoying a meal on a summer's evening, the majestic *Tilia japonica* is highlighted and the shadows created by the falling water and plants cast a beautiful light over the pond.

Planter boxes made of decking off-cuts are nearby to ensure a supply of fresh herbs and vegetables. Also close by is a wok filled with succulents, which forms a stunning and original feature.

The large existing *Tilia japonica* (possibly the largest in Victoria, perhaps even Australia) has been expertly integrated into the design and is framed by a deck which seems to float as it hugs the trunk. The deck is accessed by steps that float on the foliage below. The deck is a place for entertaining or relaxing. For true relaxation, nothing is better than taking a swing on the daybed, which is festooned with orange and red cushions. The bed is suspended above the foliage below so you feel as if you're floating away up into the clouds. What a perfect end to a night of entertaining.

This garden ticks all the boxes. Like all the best-designed gardens, it allows you to enjoy the good things in life: good company, good food and relaxing surrounds. It is a garden offering a unique living and dining experience. ■

Richard Bellemo is a Melbourne-based landscape designer and principal of RB Landscapes.



"A garden offering a unique living and dining experience"