



# McGRATH

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As our indoor and outdoor spaces continue to fuse into one, defining and landscaping your outdoor zones has never been more important.

# BRINGING THE OUTSIDE IN

For Stephen Yates, of Yates Garden Design, Australia's love of outdoor living isn't taken into consideration enough when it comes to the design of our homes.

He believes it is important to treat your outdoor area as you would any other room in your home. So, if you're about to renovate or improve your spaces, consider what you want to achieve with both before deciding upon a final design.

The good news is there are many options to suit you and your home. And you will be surprised by the results, says Stephen.

"The trend in recent years has been to slice off the rear structure and build a new addition with an open kitchen and casual living space," says Stephen.

"Adjoining the internal and outdoor spaces will create one harmonious environment you can really enjoy," he adds.

## Room for Improvement

While owning your own outdoor space is a great way to relax, it is also a great way to make money should you sell your home says Stephen.

"When looking at the re-sale component of a property, an existing garden scores high on the emotional scoreboard," he says.

After all, when a potential buyer views a property they instantly consider all the home's merits. "First impressions are invaluable when buying a property," adds Stephen.

## City Gardens

Even if you only have a tiny courtyard or balcony, there are many ways to enhance what little outdoor space you own. Before you makeover your outdoor space, however, there are a few things to consider before you decide which plants should go where.

"A balcony garden poses its own set of issues," says Stephen. "Wind is a critical factor in balcony plantings, so use larger pots for wind-swept terraces, and try planting dwarf bougainvillea or

succulents." Known for their hardiness, succulents are great low maintenance plants that will thrive in most places and nearly always look great.

## Summer Trends

This summer, Stephen believes the focus will be on maintaining a healthy and beautiful outdoor space while remaining sensitive and aware of water restrictions.

"The critical trend this summer will be to minimise water usage", says Stephen. "Mulching soil either with organic materials or pebbles will reduce water loss from garden beds and also stop weed growth," he adds.

If drought conditions do prevail for most of the summer, it might even be sensible to invest in a water tank for your thirsty garden. That, or choose dry condition planting schemes like Stephen is doing more and more often. "This year, I will be planting more succulents, cacti, Australian natives and also plants like olive trees and rosemary hedges."

## Sydney Outdoors

After 20 years of designing gardens and outdoor spaces in Sydney, is there anything Stephen thinks the city particularly lacks? "We still need far better planning," he says, "and also the plantation of more trees in our open spaces."

It's this sort of challenge, and the creativity and diversity his profession affords him, that makes Stephen love his job. "Over the years I have designed gardens, I have experimented more and used more daring plant combinations," he says. "This of course requires the confidence of my clients, but I find they're always very pleased with the results."

## Yates Garden Design

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