

GARDENS TODAY

EXPERTS' TIPS

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city romance, vintage Victorian
and colourful courtyards

DIVINE GARDEN DETAILS

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CASUAL COOL

A landscape designer takes a relaxed yet purposeful approach to creating his own Sydney garden, delivering a skilfully orchestrated profusion of shapes and textures under a canopy of established eucalypts.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS CHEN



A stone table, this page, holds fruit from a Himalayan fig tree. Opposite: curved beds, meandering paths and a spreading *Acer negundo* divide the space, creating a sense of mystery. The Art Deco birdbath was inherited.



We're only a few kilometres from the Sydney CBD but you'd never know it. A canopy of eucalypts and casuarinas filter the sun, and the large shiny leaves and globular fruit of a magnificent Himalayan fig stand guard beside the cottage. A breeze stirs the fronds of giant ferns and palms planted throughout the one-third-of-an-acre block.

"When I came here, it was all carports and asphalt – except for the existing gum trees," says owner Stephen Yates, of Yates Garden Design. "The northerly aspect, lane access and land size – it's a double block – were the drawcards."

"The L-shaped site allowed me to get a lot of different movement through the space and create elements of surprise," he adds. Japanese box hedges are the mainstay of the design, curving in and out to create garden beds and hidden seating areas. The other strong design element is the path of second-hand bricks laid in a herringbone pattern.

Near the house is a trellis entwined with wisteria and bougainvillea. Beneath it is a stone fountain set on a lime-washed wall. In this sheltered spot, a sandstone table is screened from the rest of the garden by a huge box elder maple (*Acer negundo*) which divides the garden into two 'rooms' when in leaf. Urns planted with rhaps palm and ferns are used as an accent.

The path meanders around garden beds planted with star jasmine and native violets for ground cover around camellias, gardenias, mock orange, iris and luculia ("a lovely winter bloomer, very heavily perfumed"), hydrangeas, murraya, agapanthus, bulbs and snowbell creeper. Here and there are plants Yates is 'trailing': *Hymenocallis speciosa* is planted in a shady corner where it is expected to flower well and multiply.

Along the southern boundary, a mass of cliveas with arum lilies bloom at the same time in a "spectacular sea of white and orange". When the cliveas finish, the tiny white flowers of the star jasmine ground cover team with the arum lilies and gardenias for an all-white show.

Plants and accessories on 'stopover', en route to clients, add unplanned accents; today it's two wonderful spiral topiary box

GARDEN SCHEME

1. Eucalypt
2. Casuarina
3. Rhaps palm
4. Ivy-covered shed; compost
5. Spiral box topiary
6. Kentia palms, camellias
7. Chinese star jasmine, cliveas, bergenia, lilies, gardenias
8. Chinese star jasmine, luculia, lilies, mock orange
9. Herringbone brick paving
10. Box hedge, mondo grass
11. Box-elder maple, gardenias, bulbs and agapanthus
12. Murraya
13. Bougainvillea
14. Japanese bamboo, bromeliads
15. Pergola with wisteria
16. Palms and giant ferns
17. Himalayan fig
18. Madonna lilies
19. Wall fountain



trees. A table at the end of the garden occurred by accident, when Yates teamed a broken marble base with an old sandstone plinth, and an Art Deco birdbath from his old family home gives the extra dimension of time and memory. "It's not a particularly pristine garden; things accumulate along the way," he says with a smile. For a

designer whose working life revolves around events going according to plan, this romantic retreat with its go-with-the-flow approach must be the height of luxury.

BETSY BRENNAN

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID WOOD





A terracotta figure, this page, spotlit at night, draws the eye to one corner. Dense planting obscures a neighbour's studio on the western boundary. Opposite, from left: Balinese puppet under a potted rhaps palm; miniature *Hydrangea macrophylla* bloom. Driftwood fish sculpture by sister-in-law Kay Yatea. Chinese star jasmine.