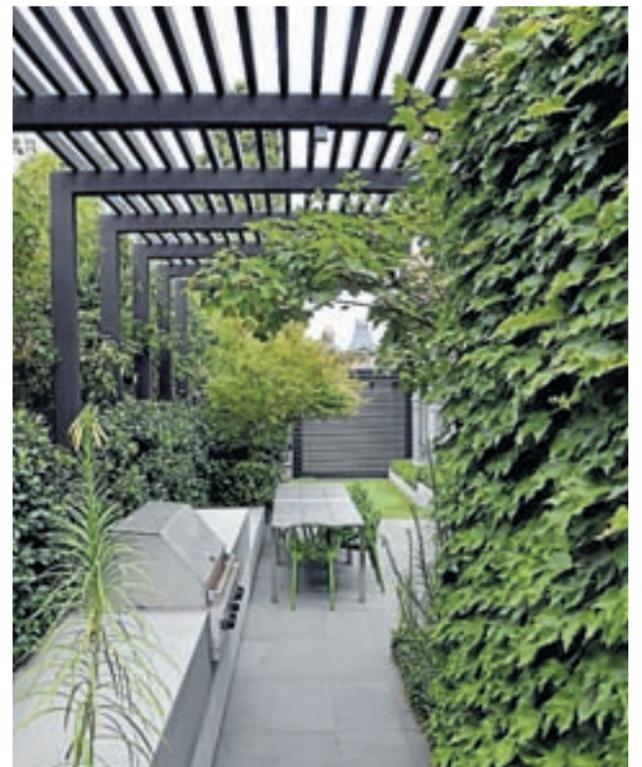




DESIGN LANDSCAPING

Harmony with greenery

Careful thought to both setting and dwelling is the key to a harmonious garden, writes **Stephen Crafti**.



A garden is often an afterthought, something to look at after the foundations of a house are laid. But this approach can create a disjointed result with the architecture and landscape appearing independent from each other.

"Ideally, the best outcome is when the architect and landscape architect or designer come together at various points during the design process," says Hugh Main, landscape designer and director of Spirit Level Designs. "You need to consider the architecture as much as the setting or context in which it's placed," he says.

Main worked closely with Chenchow Little Architects when designing the garden for a new house in Palm Beach, north of Sydney. The single-storey, white brick, cubist-style, single-level home features four courtyards and is on the edge of a bush reserve. "Our challenge was strengthening the connection of this pristine, white modernist form with the surrounding natural bush," says Main.

One technique used by Spirit Level Designs was "cloud pruning" many of the manicured native trees and shrubs that were planted closer to the house. Plants closer to the bush reserve were untouched.

"It's an approach that allows you to 'feather out' the forms to create that subtle junction," says Main, who used coastal plants such as *Westringia* (coastal rosemary), *Elaeocarpus* (blueberry ash) and *Correa alba* (white correa).

The four internal courtyards of the Palm Beach house create views from living areas as well as bedrooms. These courtyard spaces were treated as "still life" pictures and, in contrast with the exterior landscape, are highly orchestrated.

"These courtyards were carefully designed to ensure maximum effect from

Main: bush reserve fringes the Palm Beach property with, above left, its four courtyards.

Above right: pergolas accentuate the outdoor dining area of the Hawthorn house.

the living spaces as well as from the bedrooms," says Main.

The entry to the home is just as considered, with *Angophora* forming a protective canopy to the front door. And to create a sense of arrival, Main used broad sandstone steps leading from the footpath. "There has been a move towards more naturalistic-style landscapes. These tend to work effectively particularly with more streamlined and minimal architecture."

Eckersley Garden Architecture (EGA) is also a strong proponent of naturalistic landscapes, ones that appear to be integral to the architecture, while still creating their own "voices".

"You need to respond to the style of a house and its features, but you also need to be mindful of how a garden will be used, and as with an architect, understand orientation and climate," says landscape designer Scott Leung, director of EGA.

Leung worked with Neil Architecture in

There has been a move towards more naturalistic-style landscapes.

Hugh Main
Spirit Level Designs

adding a two-storey contemporary extension to the rear of a Victorian house in Melbourne's Hawthorn. The architects used honed bluestone tiles to clad the extension, responding to the home's original bluestone foundations, steps and verandah. The pool, behind the house, was reworked to create a seamless connection to the barbecue and outdoor dining areas.

EGA saw the extension of the Hawthorn house as being slightly masculine in feel and

responded by planting tall *Acer rubrum* (red maples) to soften the architecture and the garden's rendered concrete blade walls, some of which form the fence for the swimming pool. Chinese star jasmine and Boston ivy spill over the blade walls and *Liriope muscari* (turf lily), planted en masse, creates a "carpet" in royal purple when flowering. "We've responded to the strong rectilinear form of the extension with appropriate bluestone paving," says Leung.

Landarche is known for its strong abstract-style gardens. But it also appreciates the importance of responding to an architectural style and understanding how outdoor spaces will be used. Landscape architect Cameron Grant, practice director, worked closely with Rice Design which renovated an early 20th century arts-and-crafts-style house in Toorak, Melbourne.

"The design had to cater for a family with five children, requiring their own spaces inside and out," says Grant, who zoned the outdoors to ensure adults and children had their own areas.

As well as designing the garden, Landarche remodelled the swimming pool and spa, elevated slightly above ground level. Landarche also removed a box hedge outside the living areas to the rear that was blocking views to the garden. Many exotic trees and shrubs were planted, including Japanese maples, evoking the owner's previous connection to Tokyo. In the front garden, there are ornamental pear trees softening an exposed aggregate driveway leading to the front door. "We work in a similar fashion to architects. We start by creating a master plan and designate certain key areas within a "bubble" diagram. "You need to create the appropriate flow chart that allows the outdoor spaces to be used as much as those inside." **L&L**



The rear garden of this Toorak house is a series of zones (left) while the front (right) is planted with exotics.