

Design

THE SLOW REVEAL

A series of interconnected outdoor rooms meets this Melbourne family's leisure needs, beautifully.

TEXT ELIZABETH WILSON ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY & STYLING RICK ECKERSLEY & SARAH APPLEFORD

THE BRIEF

This family garden was created by landscape designer Scott Leung from Rick Eckersley Architecture, who was charged with creating a cohesive design within the large 18x50m space in a leafy Melbourne suburb. "The owners were keen to connect the house with the pool at the far end of the garden and they wanted some entertaining spaces throughout," says Scott. "They're a family with young children, so providing a good section of lawn for play space was also part of the brief."

To create a flow from the newly built back deck to the lawn below, Scott designed a terraced area of large, generous steps, made from decking material and stone cladding, which double as seating areas. The rest of the garden unfolds like a journey. "There are a lot of destination points," says Scott. >

Scott Leung

PRINCIPAL DESIGNER, ECKERSLEY GARDEN ARCHITECTURE



"I love the terracing from the top deck down to the entertaining space. The steps are so big they become useable spaces: throw some cushions down on them and they become day beds and a social area, not just steps. There are four interconnected 'rooms' in this garden and the beauty of the design is that they're not all revealed at once."



LEAFY SPLENDOUR

Ten red maples (*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory') were chosen because they're tough and drought-tolerant. When fully grown, they'll form a woodland with a large canopy in summer.

LUSCIOUS LILIES

Daylilies recur throughout the garden. Scott has used dwarf evergreen varieties including 'Stella de Oro' (bright yellow) and 'Dark Avenger' (deep claret), chosen for their long flowering from late spring to mid autumn. "The bright-yellow flowers glow in the sun and the dark colours really stand out against all the greens," says Scott.

LAWN RANGER

The lawn is Palmetto buffalo grass, chosen because it tolerates dry conditions and is green throughout the year.



A VINE SITUATION

Scott opted for a 'green-shaded' pergola in the entertaining room, rather than a permanent roof. A quick-growing deciduous climber, *Parthenocissus henryana*, has been trained across wires to form a green canopy in summer, while allowing maximum sunshine in winter.

STONY LOOKS

Bluestone, which is ubiquitous in Melbourne, has been used throughout the garden. It has been custom-cut for the pergola floor and surrounding walls.



< DON'T FENCE ME IN

The glass pool fence effectively disappears, thanks to the daylilies planted both inside and outside the fence. The timber paling fence at the end of the pool has been painted a dark colour and covered in charcoal mesh on which bougainvillea and Chinese star jasmine are growing. The day bed at the end of the pool is made from ironbark, and is designed to weather to grey to match the bluestone elsewhere in the garden. This lawn area is 15mx5m.

STREET SCENE

The lace-leaf maples planted at the front of the house are a pretty foil to the plane trees lining the street. The fine-limbed maples allow filtered light to reach underplanting.

HEDGING BETS

The hedge along the driveway is Chinese star jasmine, a familiar and fragrant friend in this garden. "It grows so quickly, providing a full screen in no time," says Scott.

HAPPY SOULS

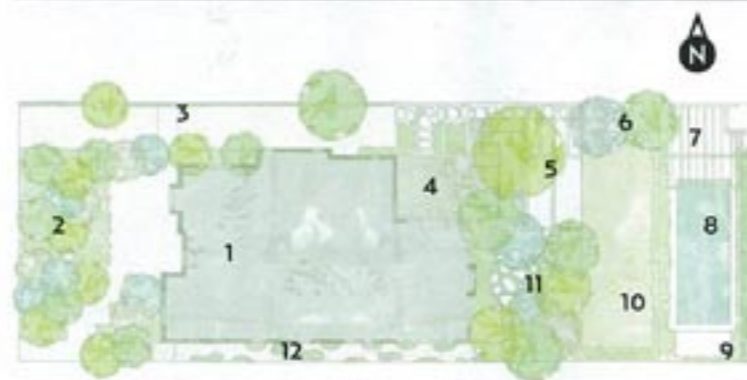
Daylilies line the main path at the front, adding a bright note in summer. "It's a very simple palette," says Scott, "There's nothing busy about it."

AT THE FOREFRONT

The house is painted in Murobond Paints Vesuvius, a dark sage-green that ties in with the bluestone. "This colour lets the garden shine while the house becomes the backdrop."



Illustration by Allison Langton.



- 1 House
- 2 Lace-leaf maples
- 3 Chinese star jasmine
- 4 Dining 'room'
- 5 Entertaining 'room'
- 6 *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory'
- 7 Lounging 'room'
- 8 Pool
- 9 Day bed
- 10 Lawn
- 11 *Acer rubrum* 'October Glory' over bluestone rounds
- 12 Daylilies on path

THE FINE DETAILS

A In a richly textured pocket of the garden, a red maple (*Acer rubrum* 'October Glory') is underplanted with daylilies. Chinese star jasmine flourishes along the fence line.

B Wide ironbark boards were used to construct the day bed at the southern end of the pool. "We leave the timber to go grey because it's a natural tone that blends with everything in the garden," says Scott.

C This pathway is formed from bluestone 'rounds' (slices cut from boulders) with mini mondo grass planted between each paver.

D Claret daylilies and hot-pink bougainvillea provide seasonal colour amid the green.

TIPS FOR A DROUGHT-TOLERANT GARDEN

- ❖ Provide structures on which to grow shading plants and choose trees that will create a canopy to protect outdoor living areas and tender plants.
- ❖ In your travels – as well as in your garden – pay attention to the neglected plants that thrive throughout the year. Bring more of them into the garden and simplify your plant selection.
- ❖ Use 'tough love' when watering. Water only when required and use irrigation only for drier conditions. This will harden the plants for hot conditions.
- ❖ Choose low-water grass varieties such as buffalo or kikuyu.

Eckersley Garden Architecture, Richmond, Victoria; (03) 9421 5537 or www.e-ga.com.au.