

Design FREE RANGE

This rambling Melbourne garden shows what can happen when opportunity knocks and imagination answers.

TEXT BY ELIZABETH WILSON ♦ PHOTOGRAPHY PRIYA SCHUBACK & SARAH APPLEFORD

SITE LINES

Pencil pines (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Stricta') and lily ponds are integral to the mature garden next door, so Myles was keen to repeat them in this garden. The pines add strong vertical elements in the long, narrow space. "They're like little sentinels popping up in the garden," he says.

MIX IT UP

Myles used a luscious and haphazard mix of foliage plants and what he calls "nanna plants", including hollyhock (*Alcea rosea* 'Halo Cerise') with its dinner plate-sized leaves and spires of red flowers. Above are *Bougainvillea* 'Sunset' and artichoke flower heads.

GENTLE STEPS

The paths are made from irregular rounds of bluestone, their meandering informal placement "breaks up what could have been a very linear space", says Myles. Growing between the rounds is white-flowering thyme (*Thymus serpyllum* 'Alba'). The path is edged with straw-coloured carex (*Carex petriei*), lavender and rosemary.

STAR ATTRACTION

The pergola at the front is covered in Chinese star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) and silver-veined creeper (*Parthenocissus henryana*). Under it are perennials such as thyme, penny royal and dwarf gazania. The front boundary hedge is *Escallonia* 'Iveyi', a dense screening plant with a soft, fluffy appearance.



Myles Broad
PRINCIPAL DESIGNER,
ECKERSLEY GARDEN
ARCHITECTURE

"This place is special because it was created for the sake of being a garden: for play, discovery, inspiration and reflection. Planting-wise, it's mixed and random like a good garden should be. It's a joy to be in."

THE BRIEF

Occupying an entire block in inner-city Melbourne, this garden is a rare jewel. Its owners were living in the neighbouring terrace house when this site came up for sale. Seizing the opportunity, they bought the property, demolished an old, unremarkable house on the site, and enlisted garden designer Myles Broad to create a wonderland along the length of their existing home. They wanted a beautiful, sweeping garden that was relaxed in style, with evocative spaces in which to entertain, potter and play. They didn't want conventional plantings or predictability. For Myles, this was music to the ears. "A garden should excite the senses, with pockets of discovery, retreat and fun," he says. At the request of the local council, the design referenced the building that formerly stood on the site with a pergola that was erected at the front of the garden and dressed with climbing plants. The challenge was to create flow in the long, narrow 450m² site. Myles achieved that by creating meandering pathways using organic bluestone rounds, edged with soft mounding plants. To create the loose style he used an eclectic mix of foliage textures and shapes. >



< GREEN SPACE

The existing garden, at the rear of the home, provided Myles with key cues for inclusions in the new garden. The old lily pond inspired him in two ways: not only did he add new ponds, he repeated the shape, creating raised square vegetable beds in the new garden. Myles also split up clumps of bird of paradise (*Strelitzia reginae*) and spread them throughout the new plot.

Straight & narrow

"Mature pencil pines echo the height of the double-storey terrace, providing much-needed verticality into the garden," says Myles.

Room with a view

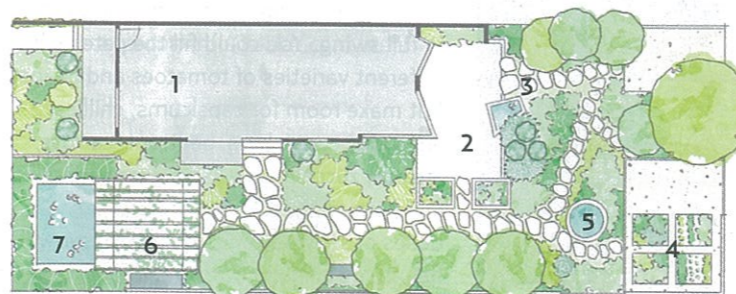
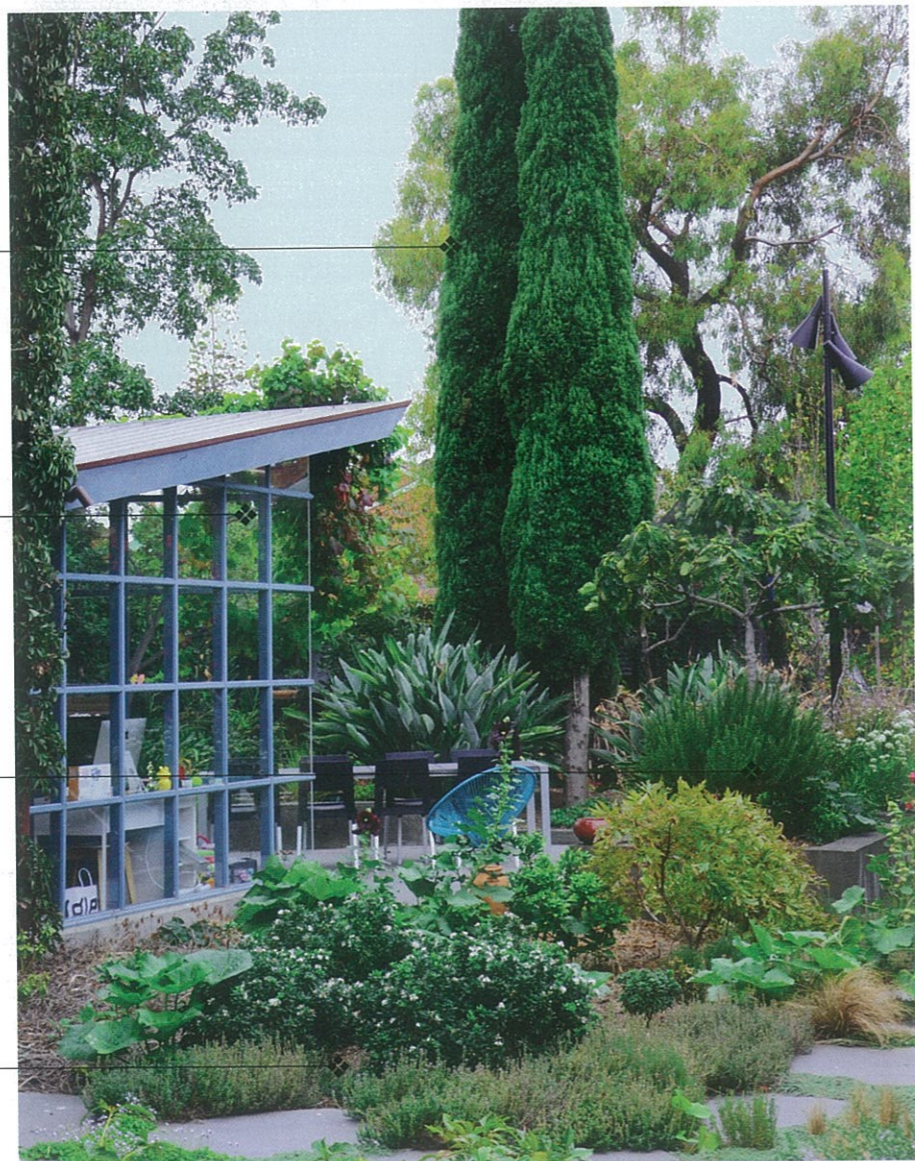
The home's rear open-plan living space has floor-to-ceiling windows to enhance the views of the enveloping garden.

Food source

Productivity plays a big part in the garden with raised herb planters repeated throughout the layout. Also growing in this planter is a fruiting fig, *Ficus carica*.

Old & new

Old-fashioned favourites are sprinkled throughout the garden, in keeping with its Victorian-era roots. The white flowering shrub is *Daphne* 'Eternal Fragrance'. Behind this is a peony rose.



- 1 House
- 2 Courtyard
- 3 Bluestone paving
- 4 Vegetable garden
- 5 Pond
- 6 Pergola
- 7 Pond



Illustration by Allison Langton.

A Under the pergola, a slab of bluestone is cantilevered off the wall to function as a barbecue bench. Underneath is spicy-scented cardamom (*Elettaria cardamomum*). On the ground, bluestone rounds have been combined with exposed aggregate. **B** When the owners renovated, the architects created a glass viewing alcove at the side of the house so they could enjoy the garden from indoors. **C** This lily pond stretches for four metres across the front of the property and is screened by an *Escallonia* hedge along the boundary. **D** At the front of the block, council heritage regulations required a low fence and a reference to the previous dwelling – hence the pergola structure.

MYLES' TIPS FOR A RELAXED GARDEN

- ❖ Make sure there's something that appeals in every season, even if it's the dying seed heads of *Sedum* though winter.
- ❖ Repetition and mass planting are important for visual impact. You'll need to plant in groups of 20 and 30 and have some threads – groundcovers for example – that repeat throughout.
- ❖ Rules were meant to be broken. Whoever told you not to plant orange and pink together has never seen *Bougainvillea* 'Sunset' in flower against an earthy orange wall.
- ❖ If you clip plants or trees, do it in an organic way. Trees are not naturally rectangular; try 'broccoli' shaped hedging with subtle undulations. **H&G**

Eckersley Garden Architecture, Richmond, Victoria; www.e-ga.com.au.