

# How to INVITE DISCOVERY

Encouraging exploration is all about breaking away from the norm, as this Melbourne masterpiece proves.

STORY Elizabeth Wilson | PHOTOGRAPHY Priya Schuback

## Relaxed approach

Rather than setting the granite planks in a block with a straight edge, Myles designed the paving so the stone fingers meet the garden in a staggered, uneven manner. "It's a softer, more relaxed approach," he says.

## Tapestry of texture

*Liriope muscari* 'Royal Purple' forms a dense, attractive low-level layer. Growing out of it is *Magnolia* 'Star Wars', a tree that produces a profusion of soft-pink flowers in spring. Christmas lilies (*Lilium longiflorum*) and *Nandina domestica* provide mid-level greenery.

## Blaze of glory

Virginia creeper is a deciduous climber, perfect for use in southern Australia, says Myles. "It loses its leaves in April, growing them again in October, which corresponds exactly with when we need sun and shade."

## Creeping beauty

Growing with abandon over the pergola is Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). The idea is to let it form a veil of trailing tendrils in summer and autumn, says Myles.

## Set in stone

The 'floor' of the entertaining zone is made from reclaimed granite planks from Rhodes Architectural Stone; the planks were salvaged from old laneways in China.



MYLES BROAD

Principal designer,  
Eckersley Garden Architecture

## The brief

After revamping the interior of their 1930s-era home, the owners of this Melbourne property turned their attention outdoors. Taking cues from the elegant lines of the architecture, they wanted the rear garden to have timeless appeal, as well as feel relaxed, casual and contemporary. And because they're a family of five, it needed to cater for their active social lives. A large outdoor dining area was high on the wish list.

## The solution

Myles created an enticing and functional garden consisting of three distinct yet connected areas: a 10x5m outdoor dining zone, a 10x12m garden retreat and 8x12m pool area (existing). The dining zone (pictured) is a magnet for family and friends who love sitting under the swathes of Virginia creeper, especially in autumn. A few steps away is a lush private seating area that balances the activity of the pool zone. Tying it all together is a layered, textured plant palette with pockets of flowers that provide year-round colour.

## Designer statement

"This garden has a relaxed mood and timeless appeal, which is such a perfect reflection of the owners. It was a pleasure to collaborate with them." ►



### LOOKING SKYWARD

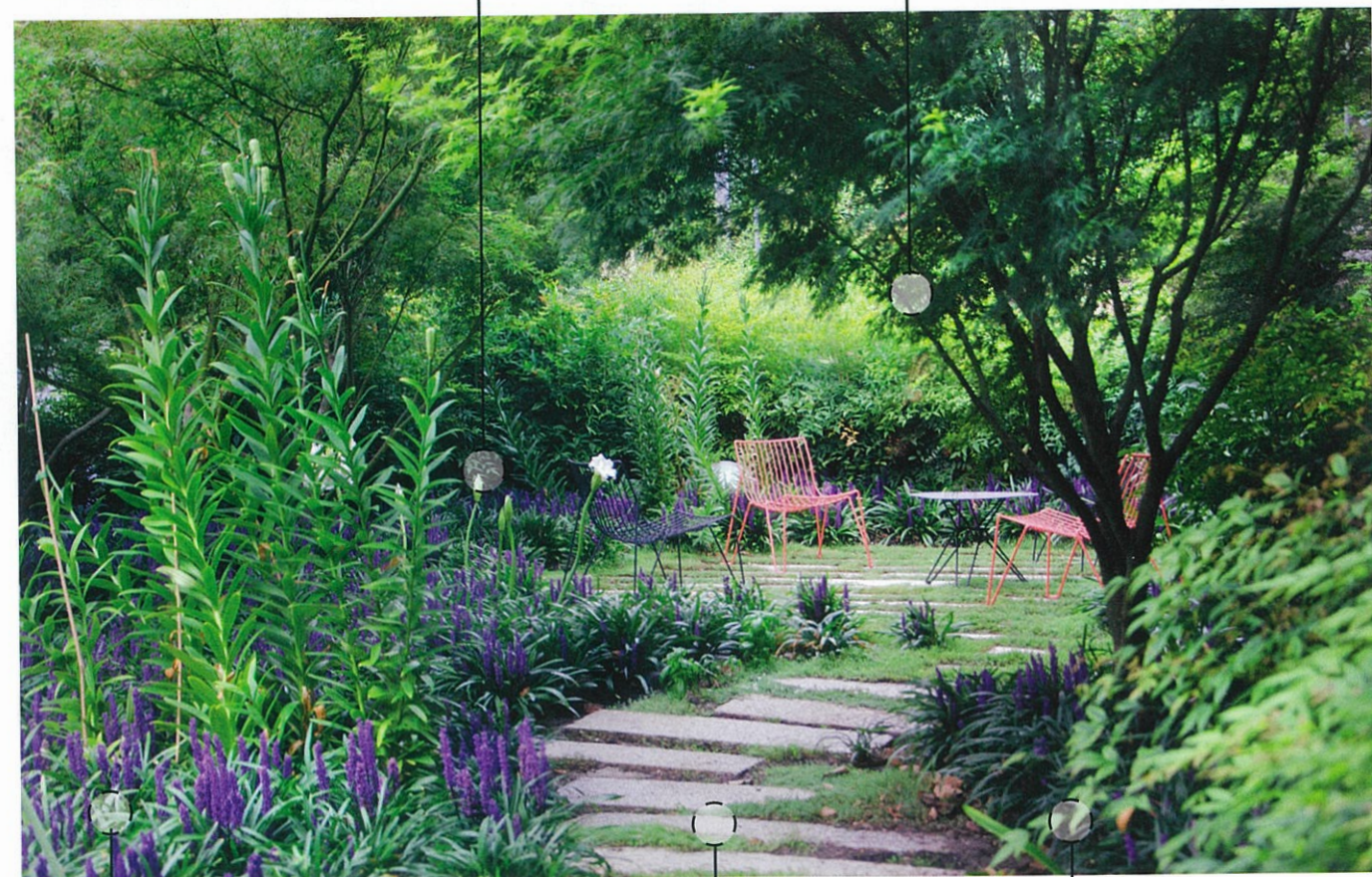
Myles designed various layouts for the dining area, the winner being an open-topped pergola, covered in climbers rather than a roof. "Roofed structures are practical but they can feel closed in, have less airflow, and often the sky is not visible," says Myles. The Virginia creeper grows over steel wires as well as the steel pergola beams to create the draping canopy overhead. "The clients, like me, love the mad jungle tendrils rather than clipped, uptight lines."

### Seasonal joy

Pretty Christmas lilies (*Lilium longiflorum*) and belladonna lilies (*Amaryllis belladonna*) are dotted throughout the space for "little pops of colour and joy now and then" as this lovely garden unfolds.

### Into the woods

Lace-leaved maples (*Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum Seiryu') form a mini woodland in this section of the garden. Myles selected multi-trunked specimens, which he favours for their interesting forms.



### Purple reigns

An evergreen with purple flower spires from summer to autumn, *Liriope muscari* 'Royal Purple' is a key plant in this garden. "It copes with sun, shade and drought, and looks good as a textural form year round," says Myles.

### Up the garden path

The path also consists of granite planks, laid in a meandering fashion leading to the 'retreat' section. Myles designed this style of path to create a sense of playful mystery and discovery in the garden.

### Fab foliage

*Nandina domestica* recurs throughout the garden and is an important textural plant. It's clipped at 1.5m in height to create a loose hedge, its foliage changing colour throughout the year from lime to dark green.

### Myles' top three climbing plants

- ✦ Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) is perfect for temperate climates. Its trunk remains bare, so it's best suited to growing over a pergola to create a canopy. It turns brilliant red in autumn.
- ✦ Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) has foliage coverage from the ground up, so it's ideal as a surface cover, growing up walls or wires. Foliage turns a peach hue in autumn but can turn deep red when very cold.
- ✦ Gum vine (*Aphanopetalum resinosum*) is a climber we're trialling as an alternative to omnipresent Chinese star jasmine and it's proving a success. An evergreen rainforest plant, gum vine retains its foliage from the ground to the top, so it provides good surface coverage. It has a mid-green leaf, tolerates shade, and can be grown along the east coast from Melbourne to Brisbane. It's highly recommended.



- 1 Star jasmine
- 2 *Liriope muscari*
- 3 Manchurian pear
- 4 Pergola
- 5 Kitchen garden
- 6 House
- 7 Existing liquidambar
- 8 Chinese elm
- 9 Oakleaf hydrangea
- 10 Pool

A Native violet (*Viola hederacea*) and kidney weed (*Dichondra repens*) are pretty groundcovers. B Three plants form this layered vignette: *Liriope muscari* (ground level), *Nandina domestica* (mid-level) and a row of Manchurian pear (*Pyrus ussuriensis*). C Pencil pines (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Glauca') grow along the length of the pool. They're quick-growing screening trees, perfect for tight spaces. D Chillies in the kitchen garden. H&G

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