

GARDENS

*Jump for joy...
Beautiful, shady
gardens with
plenty of room
for fun.*

Photograph by Martina Gemmola.

This sunken trampoline is a magnet for brothers Tom (left, with Poppy the black labrador) and Will, who seems to defy gravity in the revamped rear garden of their home in bayside Melbourne. Turn the page for more of the garden's highlights. ►

Forever GREEN

Making an evergreen garden a top priority in the reinvention of their home has paid off in spades for this Melbourne family.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson*
PHOTOGRAPHY *Martina Gemmola*

Dappled light falls over an outdoor dining area, one of several 'destination points' devised for this back garden by landscape designer Scott Leung. His planting palette is almost all green, from low rows of *Lomandra* 'Tanika' along the pool fence to the hedges of hardy Portuguese laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*) and a thick, pendulous canopy of *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Shademaster' trees. ▶

Planting a new garden might not be every home renovator's first priority, but investing in your plants early can have great rewards, as Melbourne stylist Anthea O'Connor and her husband can confirm. When the couple purchased their 1920s-era bayside home a decade ago, they needed time to plan and fund their renovation. But they decided to overhaul the garden straightaway, so the new layout could grow along with their children, Violet, now 15, Tom, 13, and Will, 11.

"We could see the value of establishing the garden before we began work on the house," says Anthea. "We knew it would give us the benefit of a beautiful garden by the time we embarked on the renovation. It was the best thing we ever did."

They knew who to call. Landscape architect Scott Leung from Eckersley Garden Architecture had designed their previous garden and they loved his aesthetic. Scott wasn't at all fazed by the proposition of creating a garden knowing the rear lines of the home would change. "We just worked with a sense of the renovation," he says. In time, the O'Connors enlisted Neil Architecture to undertake the building works and, as planned, Scott integrated his garden concept with the architectural changes. "It's been a constantly evolving design," he admits.

Transforming the 19.5x15m rear garden was the primary focus. A key existing element was the 10x4m pool on one side. The rest of the space consisted of rambling garden beds, rockeries and a fountain. "We wanted to maximise the useable space, trim back the garden beds and make them linear, and give the kids a dedicated lawn to play on," says Anthea.

Scott's starting point was the pool: he installed timber decking that wraps around it and extends to the back of the house, forming a generous outdoor entertaining space. An amazing cantilevered pergola in powdercoated steel extends three metres over the outdoor dining table. Along the pergola's beams, a silver vein creeper (*Parthenocissus henryana*) provides a green canopy

over the table. Meanwhile, popping up through a square cutout in the decking timber is a jacaranda tree, an inclusion specially requested by Anthea's husband.

The O'Connors loved the green honey locust (*Gleditsia*) trees Scott had planted in their previous garden, so they requested them again here. Rows of *Gleditsia* 'Shademaster' cultivars have been planted along the side boundaries. "The *Gleditsia* are very tough, fast-growing trees," says Scott. "They're deciduous, so they allow light into the garden in winter and provide beautiful dappled shade in summer." The trees are underplanted with masses of *Lomandra longifolia* 'Tanika'. This evergreen with fine, strappy leaves is also mass-planted along the glass pool fence, with *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy'.

To give the children that all-important lawn space, Scott incorporated a 290m² level rectangle of lawn (Sir Walter buffalo) featuring an inground trampoline. Privacy plantings were required on the rear boundary; since the O'Connors were keen to plant eucalypts, Scott put in a row of dwarf spotted gums (*Eucalyptus mannifera* 'Little Spotty'), chosen for their slender, straight trunks and balls of foliage at the perfect screening height. Hedges of Portuguese laurel add extra depth to the layers of green.

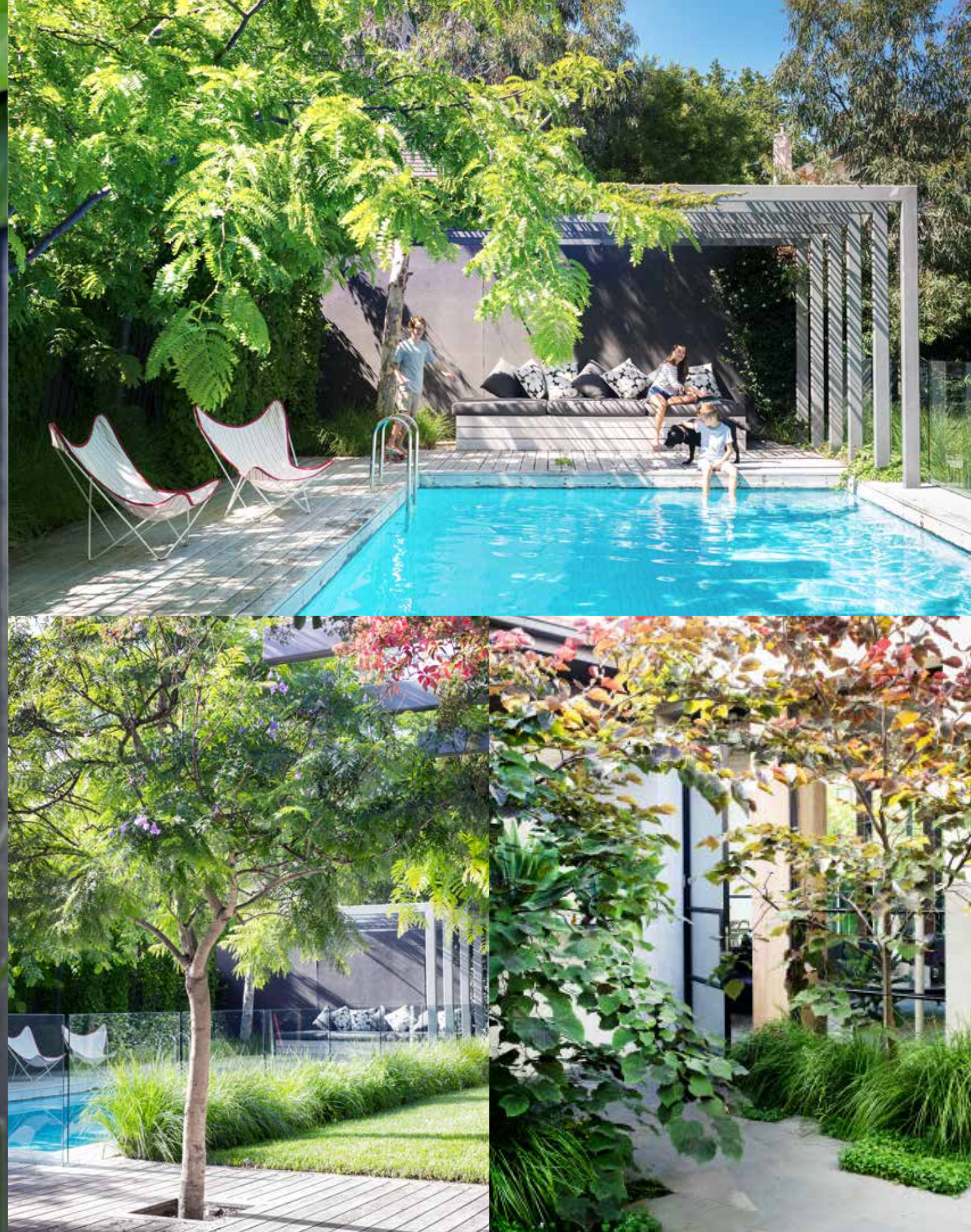
"It's a contemporary Australian garden," says Scott. "The plants are resilient and the lines are all straight, designed to help elongate the views from inside the house."

The O'Connors adore the mix of timber and greenery at the back, so for the front garden they opted for more timber decking, *Gleditsia* trees and masses of *Lomandra* 'Tanika'. A wooden arbour, draped in climbers, ushers visitors to the front door.

With their rear extension now finished, the family can fling open the new steel-framed doors and enjoy their established, lush wonderland. "I just love the evergreen layering and depth of greenery," says Anthea. "It just gets better and better." ▶

Eckersley Garden Architecture; e-ga.com.au.

The O'Connors are thrilled with their private expanse of green. "I love the contrast of textures, and nothing's too precious or formal," says freelance fashion stylist Anthea (antheaoconnor.com). The new layout complements what she calls their "softly spoken home". Growing against this fence is Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) with a fringe of *Lomandra* around the base. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** Tom, Violet, Will and Poppy hang out around the swimming pool; the pergola is built from powdercoated steel and the back wall is painted Murobond Smoked Trout. This side courtyard, visible from both the kitchen and rear living space, acts as a linking element. A jacaranda pops up through the paulownia timber decking like a living sculpture.



The leafy outdoor dining area is partially shaded by a cantilevered pergola covered in silver vein creeper, while the view extends past a canopy of lime-green *Gleditsia* foliage to a row of dwarf spotted gums. The butterfly chairs are re-covered '60s originals. Print cushions in Marimekko fabric. Outdoor table and chairs, Map International. ►



FEATURE TREES & PLANTS

- Green honey locust
(*Gleditsia triacanthos*
'Shademaster')
- Jacaranda
- Lomandra longifolia*
'Tanika'
- Portuguese laurel
(*Prunus lusitanica*)
- Dwarf spotted gum
(*Eucalyptus mannifera*
'Little Spotty')
- Silver vein creeper
(*Parthenocissus*
henryana)

'The majority of the greenery is floating above, to maximise space on the ground.' Scott Leung, landscape designer

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*) climbs and drapes over the steel beams of the pool pergola; to create additional shade, Scott created a 'roof' of tea-tree sticks, while the seat doubles as storage for pool equipment. The front garden consists of recycled-timber decking edged with *Gleditsia* trees and *Lomandra*. More Boston ivy grows against the exterior wall. Will and Tom love the exploration value of their garden. **OPPOSITE** In this little side courtyard grows an eastern redbud tree (*Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy', left) and a native tuckeroo (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*) underplanted with *Dichandra*. For Where to Buy, see page 188. **H&G**

