

GARDENS

See beauty and talent on display at Australia's premier garden show.

A layered setting of swaying grasses, gum trees and pops of colour lies beyond the front fence of this garden, a creative re-imagining of the Aussie backyard and triple winner at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS). Turn the page for all the show highlights...

A lush garden scene featuring a clothesline with a yellow towel hanging on it. In the foreground, there are large green iris plants and tall, feathery grasses. Two modern lounge chairs are positioned on a gravel path. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees.

MIFGS 2018
Australian Case Study Garden
Designed by Eckersley Garden Architecture in
collaboration with Australian House & Garden
Presented by Brickworks

Best in show

In a field of talented entries from Australia and abroad, *H&G* joined forces with a trio of young landscape designers to take top honours at the Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show.

WORDS Elizabeth Wilson | PHOTOGRAPHY Claire Takacs

TREES & PLANTS

Inland scribbly gum
Eucalyptus rossii

Water gum
(*Tristania laurina*
'Luscious')

White cedar
(*Meliodendron*)

Japanese aralia
(*Fatsia japonica*)

Yellow canna lilies

Renga penga lily
(*Arthropodium cirratum*
'Matapouri Bay')

Miscanthus
transmorrissonensis

Miscanthus sinensis
'Adagio'

Lomandra 'Lime Wave'

'This garden contains many touchpoints from decades past, yet it is undeniably modern, the garden for right now.'

Lisa Green, H&G editor in chief, on the winning garden, brainchild of H&G and Eckersley Garden Architecture

GOLD

BEST IN
SHOW

BEST
USE OF
PLANT
LIFE

Australians love their backyards. From weekend barbecues and Christmas Day cricket matches to lovingly tended vegies and nostalgic plants grown from Grandma's cuttings, the backyard provides the backdrop for many of life's good things.

With this in mind, and to mark the occasion of H&G's 70th birthday, editor in chief Lisa Green invited Melbourne-based landscape design practice Eckersley Garden Architecture to collaborate in creating a special show garden honouring the humble backyard at this year's Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show (MIFGS).

The brief to Eckersley landscape designers Clare Mackarness, Rupert Baynes-Williams and Joshua Cocks was for a contemporary garden paying homage to the backyard and its incarnations over time. "At first we thought, 'That'll be easy,'" says Clare. "But it's hard to sum up the history of the backyard in one garden."

Not only did the trio pull it off, they also scooped the pool, winning a gong for Best Use of Plant Life, scoring a gold medal for overall execution and taking out the ultimate prize: the City of Melbourne Award of Excellence for Best in Show.

What were the key features of this big-time winner? Gum trees (*Eucalyptus maculata*), lawn, swathes of native grasses, ornamental shrubs, a vegie patch, an entertainment zone with crazy paving, and even a Hills Hoist all featured in the 15x15m site. "We wanted to acknowledge our native vegetation, our European heritage and the influence of migrant culture on our backyards," says Clare.

From the outset, the designers wanted to include a pool, a barbecue and a cricket pitch. They subtly modified each of these elements, however, so that the pool became a pond filtered by water plants, the

barbecue morphed into a stylish brick fireplace in an open-air living room and the cricket pitch ran unobtrusively through the middle of the space.

Brick played a major role in the design: a low brick wall at the entrance was a reference to the suburban front fence, while the monolithic fireplace wall was a nod to Australia's sculptural landscape, with the pink hues of 'San Selmo' reclaimed bricks from Brickworks helping to reference the colours of the Red Centre.

Plant-wise, the focus was on luscious and layered foliage, an "eclectic mix of native and exotic species that complement and offset each other in form and texture," says Clare. For example, a border of *Fatsia japonica* with star-shaped leaves was underplanted with *Rhaphiolepis* 'Oriental Pink', both offset by ribbons of strappy renga renga lilies (*Arthropodium* 'Matappuri Bay'), clusters of 'Encore' azaleas, drifts of *Salvia* 'Indigo Spire' and wavy grasses (*Miscanthus transmorrissonensis* and *M. sinensis* 'Adagio'). Under the Hills Hoist was an array of capsciums, eggplants, chillies, verbena and thyme. "Inspired by Greek-influenced edible gardens," explains Rupert.

There were retro plants, too, including carina lilies (a crowd favourite), *Cordylina stricta* and kidney weed (*Dichondra repens*), which was popular as a substitute for lawn in the 1980s and is again right now. Native plants played a major role in the design, a standout being *Hymenosporum* 'Butterfly Scents', a native frangipani in shrub form. "It's a beautiful native alternative to gardenia, but much hardier," says Clare.

Along with the official awards, this garden won the hearts of MIFGS visitors. "Lots of people said they felt nostalgic and recognised plants from childhood," says Clare. "That's exactly what we hoped for." Eckersley Garden Architecture: e-ga.com.au.

'We used a variety of plants and materials to represent the patchwork of cultures in Australia today.'

Clare Mackarness

MATERIALS

Austral Bricks
'San Selmo Reclaimed'
clay bricks, Brickworks
'Luca' gneiss natural stone,
Eco Outdoors
20mm granite gravel in
Grey, Hillview Quarries
Pergola in powdercoated
steel and stainless steel
Furniture, Grazia & Co

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT A row of *Fatsia japonica* underplanted with *Rhaphiolepis* 'Oriental Pink' forms the backdrop to the cricket pitch. Pretty pink *Sedum* 'Autumn Joy' and native violet (*Viola hederacea*). The design team from Eckersley Garden Architecture: (from left) Rupert Baynes-Williams, Clare Mackarness and Joshua Cocks. A pair of Featherston chairs from Grazia & Co, set against white correa (*Correa alba*), purple-flowering aster daisies and evergreen *Miscanthus transmorrisonensis*. The garden was designed as a journey through swaying grasses and textured garden beds to the entertainment zone beyond, bordered by a row of water gums (*Tristaniopsis laurina* 'Luscious').

