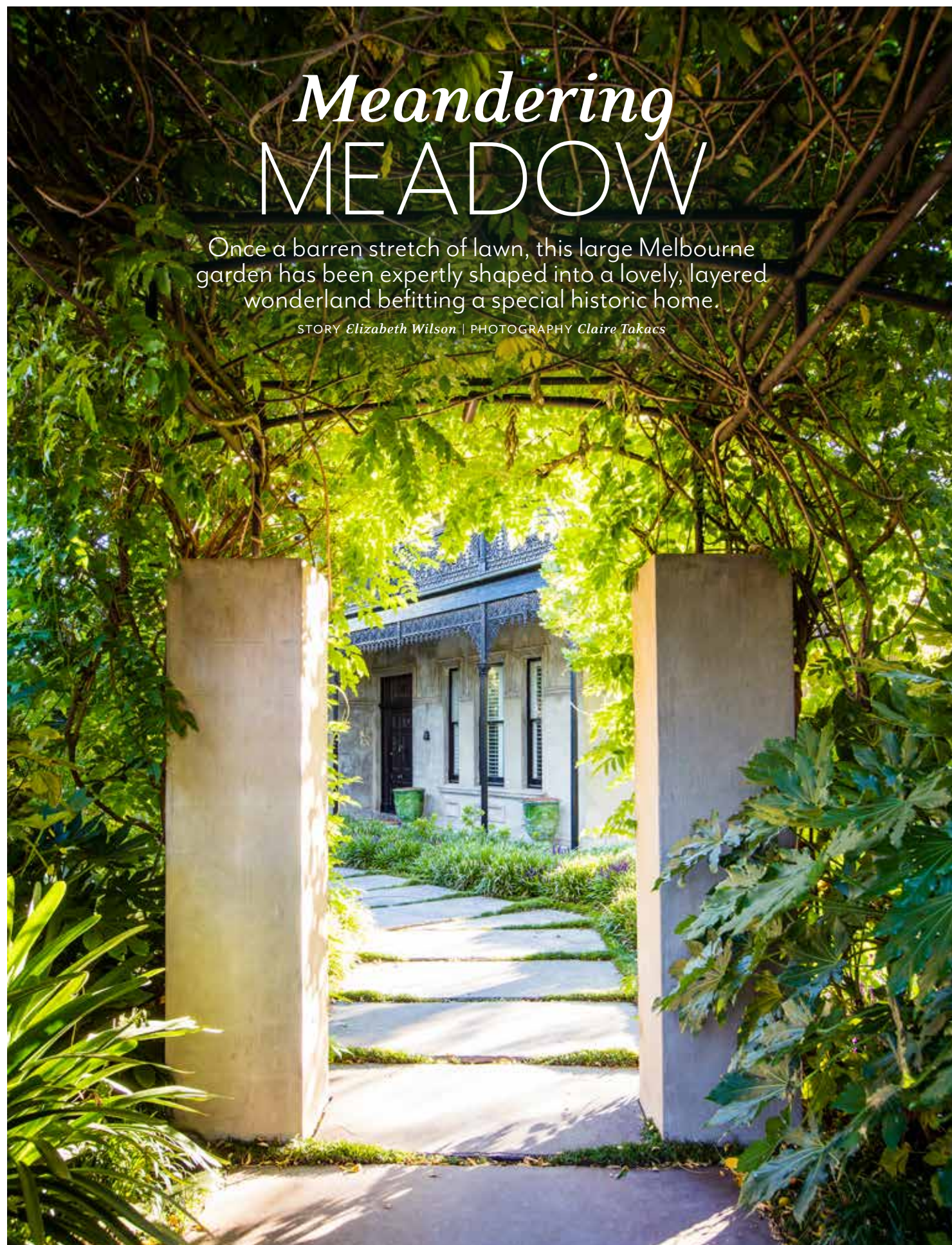


# Meandering MEADOW

Once a barren stretch of lawn, this large Melbourne garden has been expertly shaped into a lovely, layered wonderland befitting a special historic home.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Claire Takacs*



A sculptural sundial in powdercoated steel, titled *Observatory* by Melbourne-based artist Simon Perry, is a fitting folly in this semi-formal front garden designed by Myles Broad of Eckersley Garden Architecture. To the left is a tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Fastigiata'), notable for its upright form and shapely leaves; to the right is a lace-leaf maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum Seiryu'). Mass-planted *Liriope muscari* in purple and white create a lush, knee-high groundcover. **OPPOSITE** A wisteria-cloaked arbour at the entrance to the property hints at the wonders within. ►



A beautiful garden is a home's greatest ally. It can help soften the architecture, settle the dwelling into its surroundings and give it a sense of place. And, as is the case with this Victorian-era abode, it can restore a sense of dignity and poise.

Sitting on a corner block in Melbourne's inner suburbs, the grand two-storey home was once part of a larger estate. Over time the land was divided and sold off until the house found itself on a much smaller plot (though still bigger than most suburban blocks). When the current owners bought the property in the late 1990s, their priority was restoring the building and transforming it into a comfortable family home. It was several years before they turned their attention to the garden. They realised they needed help – and called on landscape designer Myles Broad, co-principal of Eckersley Garden Architecture.

When Myles arrived on the scene, the house was marooned in an enormous expanse of patchy lawn, which had suffered due to various building works on the site. There was only a vestigial garden. “A clump of agapanthus, a row of pencil pines and a climbing rose – that was about it,” says Myles.

His starting point was to introduce trees to the vast 30x15m front area: “We needed to install some lovely sentinel trees to help bring the house into scale.” For this, he chose the narrow tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera* ‘Fastigiata’), a beautiful upright deciduous tree that can reach heights of up to 15m, with large leaves and tulip-shaped flowers in spring. He planted 25 of these in neat rows to create the much-needed tall canopy. Intermingled with them is a layer of lace-leaf maples (*Acer palmatum* ‘Dissectum Seiryu’), which helps form a pretty mid-storey canopy.

At the front entrance to the property, Myles designed an arbour draped in wisteria. In lieu of lawn, he planted masses of *Liriope muscari* in white and purple (‘Royal Purple’ and ‘Monroe White’)

interspersed with white belladonna lilies. Dotted through these groundcovers are oversized limestone pavers, 180x90cm, which lead to the front door and along the side of the home to a rear entertainment zone. “We wanted to create the sense of walking into a wild English meadow,” says Myles. “We used traditional plants to reflect the era of the home, but haven't used them in a traditional way.”

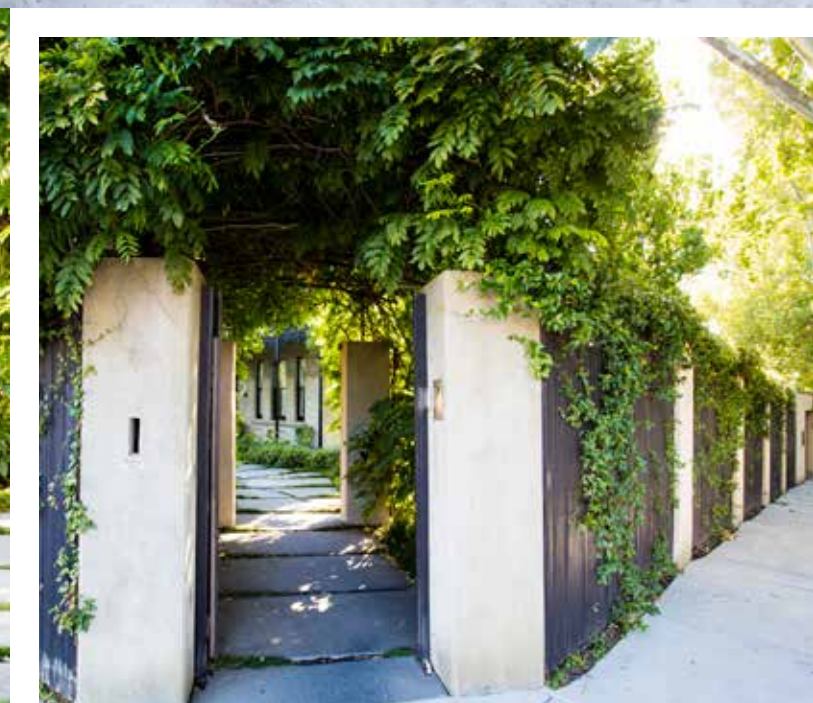
At the side of the house, another wisteria-covered arbour leads to the entertainment area, where a large dining table sits among the greenery. Here, the floor is exposed aggregate with a fleur-de-lis-patterned pebble inlay, another nod to the home's heritage. The table sits under an open steel pergola – designed by Myles and made by Lump Studio – to reflect the kind of folly found in traditional pleasure gardens. With its curved ‘roof’ featuring a curlicue pattern, the pergola forms the perfect frame for trailing Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*). Textured foliage plants – aloes, crassula, gardenias, ornamental gingers and bougainvillea – dominate this space. “It harks back to the time of Victorian specimen gardens, with a focus on interesting forms and shapes and scents,” says Myles.

The homeowners, both lovers of art, have installed sculptural works throughout the garden, including some eye-catching modern works at the front. One of these, a bronze sculpture by local artist Lisa Roet, is of two colossal chimpanzee hands; they reach out like a mythical creature bursting from the earth, heightening the surreal quality of this already magical setting.

Ten years on, this is a garden that has grown to envelope and support the home in all the ways Myles and his clients had hoped. Despite its relative youth, it feels like an old friend that has always belonged. And that is what every home deserves. ▶

**Eckersley Garden Architecture, Richmond, Victoria;**  
(03) 9413 3223 or [e-ga.com.au](http://e-ga.com.au).

The broad-leafed foliage of Japanese aralia (*Fatsia japonica*) provides an evergreen backdrop throughout the garden. **OPPOSITE** clockwise from top left *Liriope muscari* ‘Royal Purple’ in flower. A bronze sculpture, *Chimpanzee Hands* by Melbourne artist Lisa Roet, is a focal point of the front garden, where tulip trees form the tall canopy layer and lower beds contain *Liriope muscari*, *Sedum* ‘Autumn Joy’ and *Clivia*. A tunnel of wisteria at the front entrance. The pathway of limestone pavers edged in mini mondo grass leads through the urban ‘meadow’. *Sedum* ‘Autumn Joy’.





Defining the outdoor dining space, the ornate steel pergola is a perfect climbing frame for Virginia creeper, which forms a green 'roof' over the table. Surrounding the table is a mix of richly textured plants, including candelabra aloe (*Aloe arborescens*), the spiky rosettes of which poke through a hedge of jade plant (*Crassula ovata*). Along the rear wall is the original row of pencil pines (*Cupressus sempervirens* 'Glaucæ'), behind a display of fragrant ornamental ginger (*Hedychium flavum*). Draping over the barbecue is *Bougainvillea* 'Tango'. At the base of each pergola corner is a steel planter filled with gardenias. **H&G**

FEATURE PLANTS

- Tulip tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera* 'Fastigiata')  
Lace-leaf maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum Seiryu')  
*Liriope muscari* 'Royal Purple'  
Belladonna lily  
Ornamental ginger (*Hedychium flavum*)  
*Aloe arborescens*  
*Crassula ovata*  
Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)

*'This area harks back to Victorian specimen gardens with a focus on plants with interesting forms and shapes and scents.'* Myles Broad, landscape designer