

petite world

This small Sydney garden is bursting with big ideas on clever material, plant and colour choices

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THIS PAGE: LEATHER DISH, THE DESIGN HUNTER; THE DESIGN HUNTER.COM AUJ CUSHIONS, MOROCCAN TABLE LANTERN, BLACK STONE CYLINDER WITH SUCCULENT, ALL ADAM ROBINSON DESIGN, ADAMROBINSONDESIGN.COM

The built-in bench is generous enough for entertaining, but neatly tucked away so it doesn't overpower the garden. A lush screen of Timor black bamboo behind the bench provides shade and privacy from the neighbours.

Creating a beautiful garden in a tiny space that's functional, suitable for children and can also be used as an entertaining zone is no mean feat. When landscape designer and stylist Adam Robinson was tasked with designing an outdoor area for this two-storey home in Glebe, Sydney, the brief was tight: the family needed a casual area to entertain friends, a lawn for the two girls to play on and an area to park the car and hang out the washing. They were also keen to create privacy at the back of their house.

"Continuity of materials was the key to harmony," says Adam. "Because we had to fit everything into a relatively tight space, it was important to make all the areas flow into each other seamlessly." Mahony Landscapes was brought in to bring Adam's vision to life. "We installed bi-fold doors on both the ground and first floor that flow out onto the garden and balcony," he says. "This allows the top area to become a breakout area from the indoor living space."

Adam also had to consider what the garden would look like when viewed from the balcony, to ensure it still looked inviting from an aerial view. He did this by creating lush layers of greenery. "This encourages you downstairs and into the bigger space," he says. Downstairs, lime-wash timber-look tiles in the garden tie in with the lime-wash timber floor inside. "The grass bleeds into the tiles to create an area with hard surface that is usable, but also has



Essential for a family of four, the garden has a large fold-down washing line, which Adam had painted the same colour as the house. It's tucked away out of sight and when not in use it can easily be folded down.

a softness to it," he explains. "It blends the house with the garden. The amount of lawn laid was limited to highlight the greenery. It also allows the girls to run through the sprinkler, which they adore."

Space is at a premium, so Adam used clever techniques to make the garden feel as large as possible. "The built-in bench seat allows for either entertaining large groups or stretching out on your own, but doesn't take up too much space, as it's tucked in close to the garden beds. The car area boundary walls are dressed with hanging pots so it still feels like a garden."

Timor black bamboo (*Bambusa Lako*) is used in the garden beds to contrast with the stark lines of the car area. "It grows tall, so it creates lushness without taking up too much horizontal space, as well as disguising next door," says Adam. To give the sense of a mature and full garden, understorey plants sit below the bamboo. "Philodendron 'Imperial Red', mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria trifasciata*) and cast iron plant (*Aspidistra elatior*) are all shade-loving, so work well here."

The other beds throughout the garden provide layered and textured greenery. The garden gets a lot of sun, so Adam used *Alcantarea imperialis*, foxtail agave (*Agave attenuata*), blue jade tree (*Crassula Ovata 'Blue Bird'*) and Agave 'Blue Glow', which are all sun-loving plants. "The groundcovers are Carex 'Frosted Curls'

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inside to outside

Creating a connection between indoors and the garden has allowed a feeling of a larger living space. Adam achieved this by installing bi-fold doors on both levels and tiling the outdoor area with lime-wash timber-look tiles to link with the timber floor inside the home.



(*Carex albula*) and *Convolvulus* 'Blue Moon' (*Convolvulus mauritanicus*) and are designed to look as though they are delicately spilling out of the garden," says Adam.

On the balcony, floating white herb pots on the painted timber screen are placed near the kitchen so they are easy to access and to ensure they are constantly watered. The grey pots in front of the car screen door and on the balcony house *Alcantarea imperialis*. These structured plants look striking against the crisp white screen. Underneath are jade plants (*Crassula ovata*) to soften the feel.

All of the plants thrive in Sydney's hot climate. Although most of the garden is low maintenance - essential for a young family - bamboo is a thirsty plant so it has an automated irrigation system.

For this garden, Adam kept the pots and furniture pieces simple and pared back. "There is enough colour in the cushions and the house itself," he says. "Keeping the pots neutral gives a sophisticated and timeless feel. They are textured so they look natural in the garden space." The chic contemporary 'Jil' coffee table from Tait complements the garden's clean design. The 'Tio' easy chair from Spence & Lyda is used in different spots around the garden; the comfortable design is perfect for relaxing with a book on the grown-up balcony, or sitting comfortably downstairs while the children play on the grass. adamrobinsondesign.com.au. For more on Mahony Landscapes, visit themahonygroup.com.au.

3 GREAT FINDS



1. Porcelanosa 'Chester Acero' tile in Acero, \$99/sqm, Earp Bros, earp.com.au.
2. 'Tidal' lounger, \$840, Tait, madebytait.com.au.
3. 'White Gloss' 90mm prefinished lining board, \$7.80/lineal metre, Glosswood, glosswood.com.au.

3 GREAT FINDS PRODUCT SOURCING: ALICIA SCIBERRAS

This balcony is linked to the garden through the use of neutral tones. The curved leaves of *Alcantarea imperialis* form a striking contrast, while furniture from Tait and Spence & Lyda allow the family to enjoy the garden from above.



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