



# PRE-AUCTION MAKEOVER

Before this coastal home hit the market, the balcony needed an update. Enter a talented landscape designer with budget-savvy ideas

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Landscape designer and stylist Adam Robinson (opposite) checks on the balcony plants. Bathed in sunshine, the breakfast bar overlooks the ocean (this page), with Tait 'Good One' stools perched below. Adam brought homeowner Ricky's tired Adirondack chairs back to life with a lick of paint, while a simple 'Airlie' side table from Eco Outdoor sits in the middle.







before



**W**hen landscape designer and stylist Adam Robinson was called in to make over the outdoor space of this penthouse apartment on Sydney's Northern Beaches, he saw a great wraparound balcony with water views and a north-east aspect, sadly let down by dated tiles, an array of mismatched furniture and a distinct lack of style. "The apartment was beautiful inside," he says, "but outside there was no design intent or continuity. It was a great size, drenched in sunlight and you could see right out over the beach, but none of this was being showcased by its current condition."

Homeowner Ricky Allen agreed. "When people walked out here for the first time they would say the balcony looked as if it belonged to another apartment," she says. "Inside was all Hamptons style and my balcony would never have been allowed in the Hamptons! It had absolutely no style. I felt too embarrassed to entertain out there. But as soon as Adam walked onto the balcony, he knew exactly what needed to be done to allow it to reach its true potential."

Ricky had decided to sell her two-bedroom apartment and knew the outdoor area was going to be a strong selling point for the home, but it needed to be fully leveraged. She didn't want to overcapitalise on the space when she was planning on moving out in the near future, so the budget was modest.

Adam, assisted by the team from Sydney-based garden design and maintenance company Garden Society, set to work removing the patterned plastic rugs that hid the terracotta tiles. "We had to leave the tiles as it would have been too costly to rip them up," says Adam. "Instead, we laid two beautiful natural coloured and textured rugs. These had the added advantage of breaking up the long, narrow space to create two defined areas; one for lounging and one for dining, with a little breakfast bar tucked in at the end with a view to the sea."

“It cost \$6600 and was worth every cent”  
 RICKY ALLEN, OWNER



Homeowner Ricky's old teak table was refreshed by a coat of white paint (opposite), while 'Ida' deck chairs from Eco Outdoor allow guests to lean back and take in the view. An expansive rug from Armadillo&Co in a natural texture adds warmth and creates a separate dining space.

Hardy succulents and natives (opposite & above) offer evergreen foliage, making the balcony a welcoming space all year round. Ricky's frangipani was repotted and placed in a sunny spot on the balcony. The tall white planters and smaller concrete pots are from Adam's retail shop, Adam Robinson Design.



before

SLATE BOARD AND LINEN NAPKIN (OPPOSITE). THE DESIGN HUNTER, THEDESIGNHUNTER.COM.AU





Rather than throw away the old furniture, Adam rejuvenated Ricky's teak dining table and blue Adirondack chairs with a coat of white paint, bringing them in line with the coastal feel. He added a breakfast bar and paired it with stools, then replaced the mishmash of pots with contemporary white stone planters, creating clusters of different sizes but keeping the same style throughout. Adam reused some of the existing plants such as the frangipani, and asked the team from Exotic Nurseries to help with plant supply. They brought in a range of tough succulents that would be happy in the hot sun and salt-laden breeze, which included *Kalanchoe beharensis* and *Kalanchoe hildebrandtii* 'Silver Spoons'. It was then time to dress the space for sale with art, cushions and accessories.

"Every single person who saw the before-and-after photos could not believe it," says Ricky. "My multi-coloured look certainly interfered with the ocean views, so making everything white and wood was a vast improvement." The new balcony flowed out from the inside and they finally looked as if they belonged together. "The balcony became a real star; it helped market the apartment, which sold before auction," says Ricky.

"We had to be quite clever to keep the budget down, but there is always a little bit of investment," says Adam. "I was really happy with the result. The new balcony had a fresh, coastal look in keeping with the location and the rest of the apartment. And we did it all in a day!" **10**  
Go to [adamrobinsondesign.com](http://adamrobinsondesign.com) for more about Adam's work. Find out more about Garden Society at [gardensociety.com.au](http://gardensociety.com.au), and Exotic Nurseries at [exoticnurseries.com.au](http://exoticnurseries.com.au).



The air-conditioning unit was cleverly concealed by tall planters and small pots on top (above). The Art Deco-inspired wall art (above right) is from Adam's store. Multiple succulent pots in varying sizes (opposite) create a cute cluster effect, adding life, interest and depth to an otherwise boring surface.

### what the real estate agent saw

Geoff Pickering, director, Coastview Real Estate

"Here in Collaroy, we're protected from the south winds and in a sheltered spot like this, people want to be able to sit outside and entertain while making the most of the ocean views - they're looking for usable space. Ricky's wraparound balcony is a major feature with its north-east aspect but it was completely mismatched; there was no flow from the inside. The makeover makes a much better first impression as it's far more usable and draws guests outside. The apartment was bought by a family who saw the size and functionality of the balcony as a huge bonus. They loved how it looked and that the zone was partly covered, with plenty of space for entertaining. The fact that it was so well presented definitely enhanced the property and contributed to the sale price."



### 6 seaside plant picks

Here are Adam's top choices for a sunny outdoor area by the sea



*Kalanchoe orgyalis* (copper spoons) grows into a small shrub, adding height to plant displays.



*Cotyledon ladismithiensis* (bear's paws) are a sculptural succulent, suitable for both indoors and out.



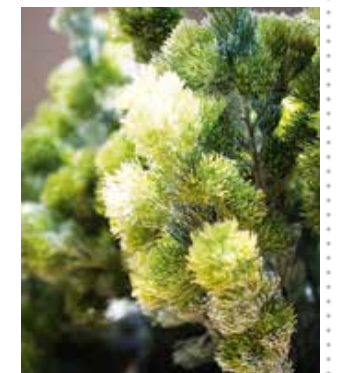
*Senecio rowleyanus* (string of pearls) has trailing 'beads' that look great in a hanging planter.



*Westringia* (coastal rosemary) is a native evergreen shrub. It's both salt tolerant and low maintenance.



*Kalanchoe beharensis* (elephant's ear) has velvety leaves and grows into a small, tree-like shrub.



*Adenanthos sericeus* (woolly bush) has silvery green foliage and works as both a hedge and shrub.