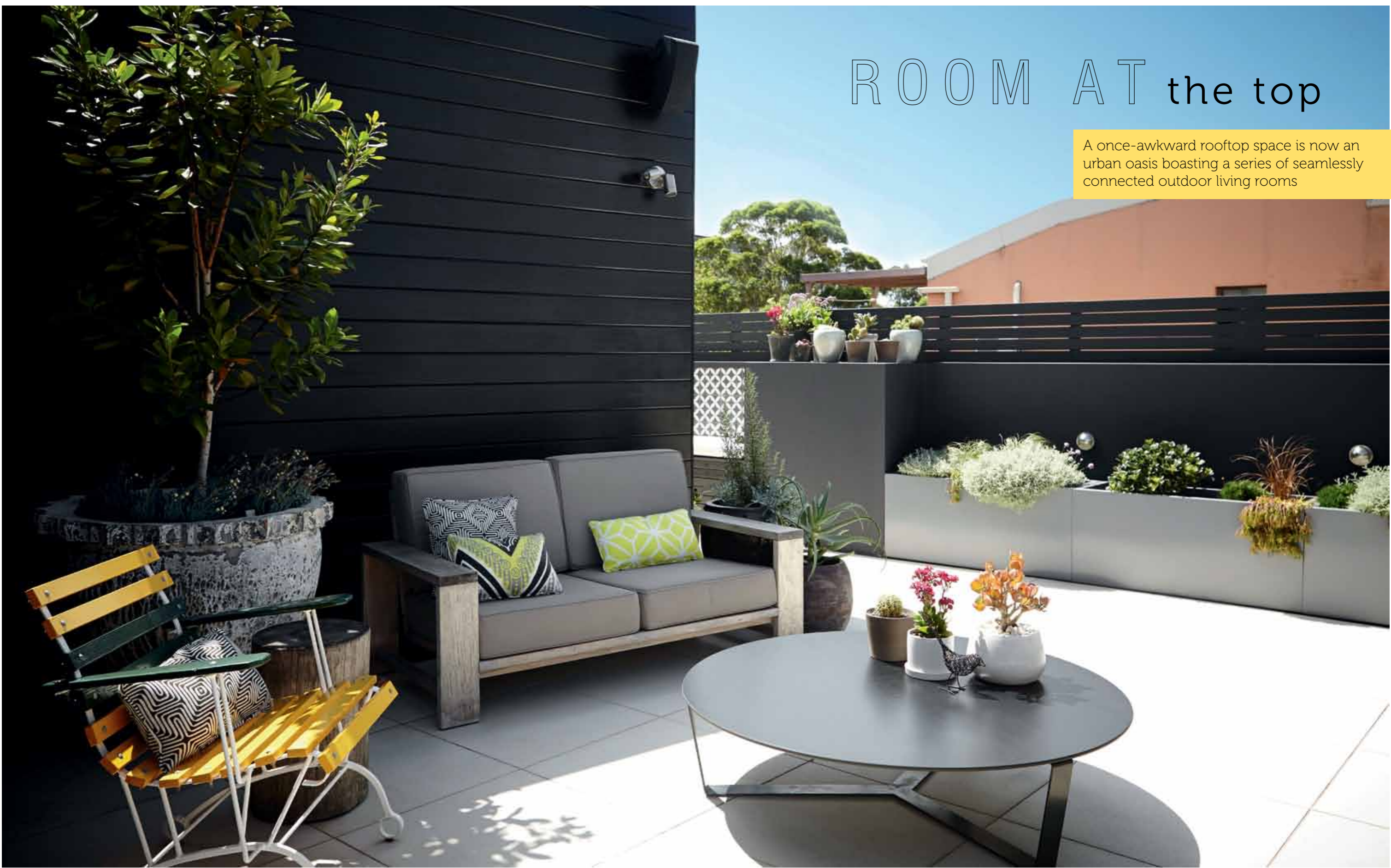


ROOM AT the top

A once-awkward rooftop space is now an urban oasis boasting a series of seamlessly connected outdoor living rooms



This modern rooftop retreat is all about style, comfort and enjoyment, proving you don't need a ground-level garden



OPENER This modern rooftop retreat, built by Quercus Gardens, is carved into distinct zones, including a lounge area.

ABOVE LEFT The architectural form of the drought-hardy aloe vera starkly contrasts the rustic patina of the pot.

ABOVE RIGHT For cook-outs, there is a built-in stainless-steel barbecue with prep space and under-bench cabinetry.

OPPOSITE Dark colours reduce glare and cool the space while a motorised sail awning provides shade when needed.

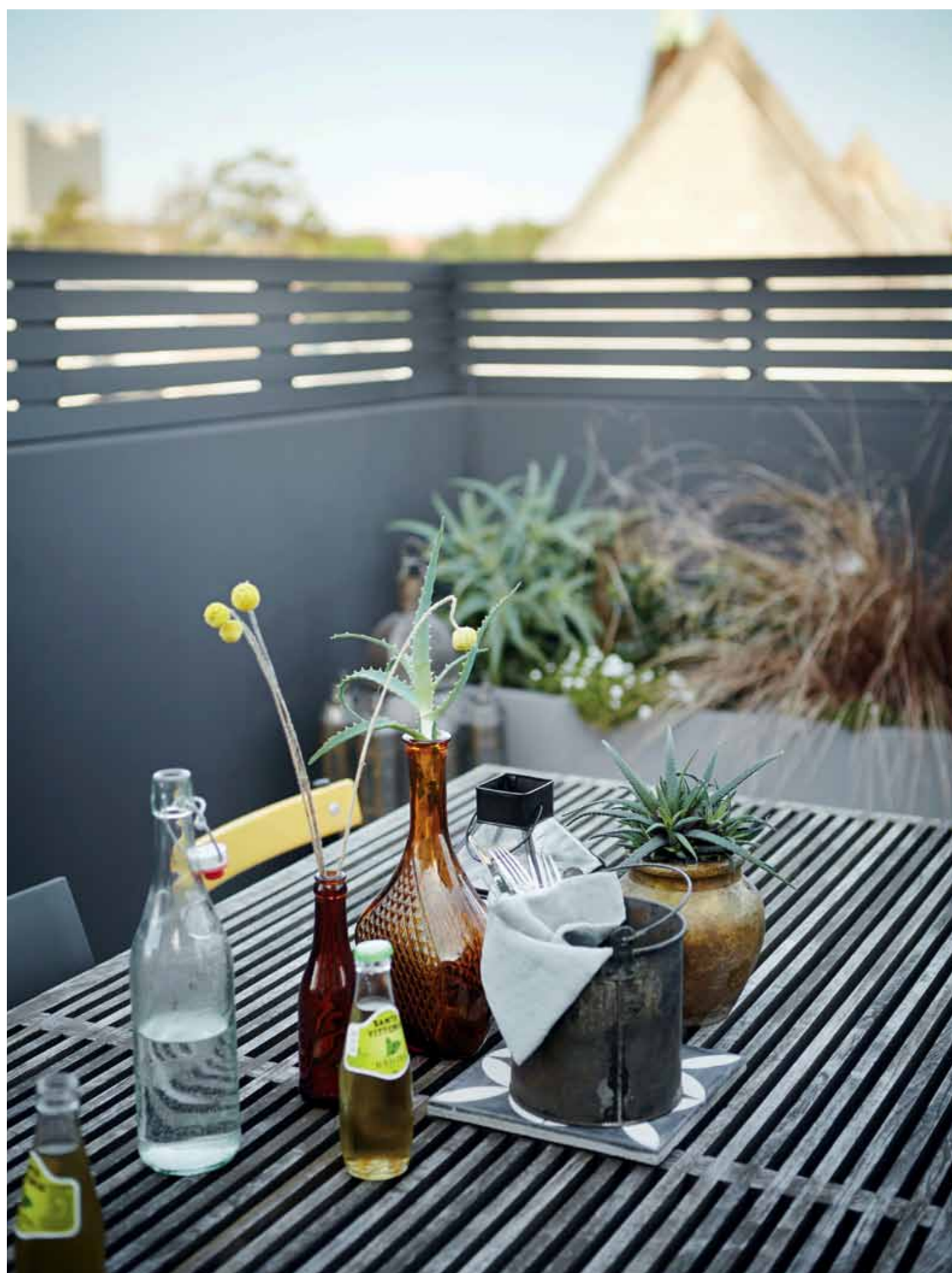
No room on the ground to create an outdoor entertaining space? No problem, why not head on up to the roof, which is precisely what Blair and Hamish, the couple who own this inner-Sydney property, did. The rooftop didn't exactly provide an easy solution — the space was awkwardly shaped and exposed to harsh sun and southerly breezes — but with some creative thinking, the rooftop was converted into a series of intimate outdoor rooms with a cool, contemporary look that perfectly suits the owners' personal style and the urban location.

The challenge of designing a hideaway that would make sense of the rooftop's unconventional configuration and offer the couple the flexibility to use their high-rise haven

for a host of different occasions was given to Adam Robinson of Adam Robinson Design. Although seemingly inelegant, the layout gave Adam a chance to create something unique, so he set about developing a plan. The result is a versatile outdoor space for entertaining which has been carved into different rooms for cooking, dining and lounging.

The couple wanted something contemporary with a masculine feel, but getting the look right was only part of the process — functionality was imperative. They needed spaces that were easy to maintain and versatile enough for small- or large-scale entertaining; they wanted privacy and shade; and they desired a cool, safe place where their much-loved pets could be a part of the couple's outdoor lifestyle. »





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Making the space private and safe, and adding to the room-like feel, there are rendered perimeter walls topped by timber slat screening. Dark colours were used for the boundary walls (Porter's Paints Triple Lead for the walls and Palm Beach Black for the screens) and the cedar tongue-and-groove cladding on the wall behind the lounge area (also Palm Beach Black). This significantly reduces glare, a boon on a bright summer's day.

One of the standout features of the new design is the barbecue area. A stainless-steel Electrolux barbecue has been built into a polished concrete benchtop, below which there are timber cabinets, stained in Palm Beach Black to complement the timber screening and wall panelling in the lounge room. The splashback, a feature in its own right, is clad in handmade Moroccan tiles and, for a burst of colour, there is a yellow Uto suspension light.

Moroccan tiles, in the same colourway but of a different pattern, were used to create a second feature wall around the built-in daybed and planter that grace a different part of the rooftop. This creates a sense of connection even though the spaces are quite separate. Just as much thought was given to catering to the comfort of the couple's cat, which is why the day bed has a hidden cat box in its base.

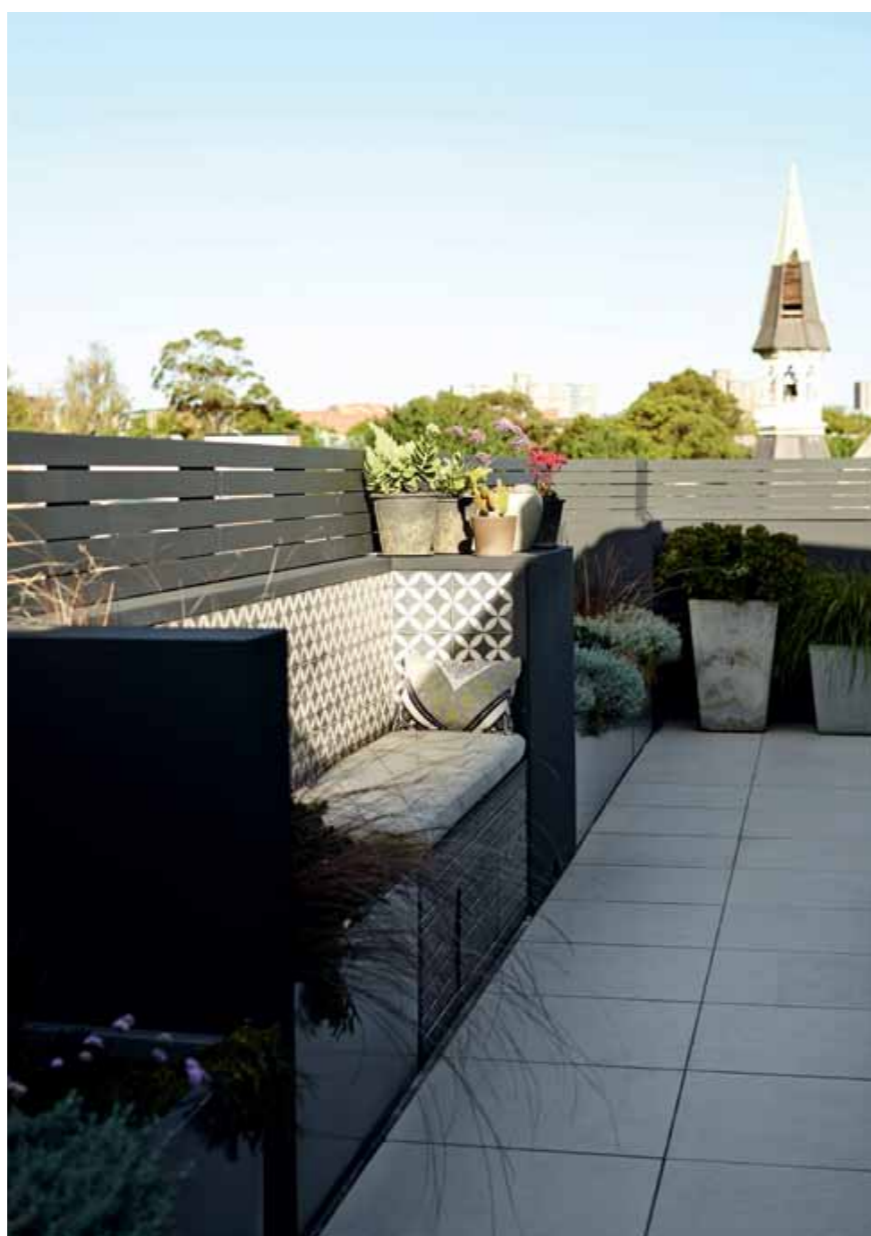
Given the exposed rooftop location, how to provide shade was a big issue. For this, the designer sought a hi-tech solution in the form of a Corradi Velombra sail awning. This motorised, fully automatic awning rotates 360 degrees (so it can be used to shade either the lounge or dining area) and it has a sensor that ensures it automatically retracts when the wind picks up.

The extreme exposure was a key factor in the selection of the plants, some of which grow in galvanised steel »

OPPOSITE Adding some subtle colour and warmer hues, the table decoration picks up on the colour of the carex.

ABOVE LEFT Alfie the Cavoodle and his dads enjoy a relaxed lunch far from the urban bustle of the streets below.

ABOVE RIGHT The tiles behind this planter, which is attached to the day bed, reference the barbecue splashback.



LEFT TOP Care was taken to ensure that plants that would flourish in the conditions were used, hence the use of succulents.

LEFT MIDDLE The splashback tiles are complemented by the concrete benchtop and contrasted by the suspension light.

LEFT BOTTOM Painted vivid yellow, this garden chair is one of several elements brought in to add pops of strong colour.

ABOVE RIGHT This bench incorporates the concealed cat box with one access point for the cat, another for cleaning.

OPPOSITE Although distinctly separate, both the dining and lounge areas still have a very strong sense of connection.

planter boxes, others in feature pots with a rustic patina. The designer looked for tough plants with interesting textures and forms, such as carex and various succulents. The planting palette has many shades of green, a smattering of brown and a few flowering plants with blooms of yellow, pink or white.

Scale was important so several semi-mature plants, including a large frangipani and a native water gum, were used to add height, as was a row of potted olive trees that were placed along one side of the dining area and underplanted with trailing kidney weed.

From the potted plants to the furniture and Wi-Fi-controlled outdoor speakers, this modern rooftop retreat is all about style, comfort and enjoyment, proving you don't need a ground-level garden to have your dream outdoor entertaining space. ❀

Garden design

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