

BACK GARDEN

Betsy the labrador approves of her family's new backyard. Tall plants, such as slender weaver's bamboo and giant bird of paradise, help to create a sense of privacy. A Garden Life terracotta pot has been planted with spiky *Aloe arborescens*.

DECKED OUT

Adam Robinson transforms a compact space into a multipurpose garden for a family on their return to sunny Bondi from the UK

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LEAF STORY

A range of colours and textures create a lush palette.



Olea europaea
Olive



Banksia integrifolia
Coast banksia



Strelitzia nicolai
Giant bird of paradise



Crassula ovata
'Blue Bird'



GARDEN BED

Layers of rich greenery create a tranquil corner.

DECK (opposite & below)

The oversized benchtop has a 60mm polished concrete top and integrated Electrolux barbecue, with the HardiePlank panelling doors painted in British Paints' Arctic Grey to match the house colour. The white terrazzo bowl by the barbecue is planted with Mexican snowball succulents.



When they returned to Sydney from the UK, Anna Saunders and her husband Tim wanted a home with enough outdoor living space for barbecues, and to accommodate a dog. “A garden was important to us after living in a small apartment in a cold urban area,” says Anna, who shares the beachside Bondi semi with Tim, their children, Isobel, 3, and Harvey, 1, and Betsy, the black labrador. Despite its compact size, the revamped garden delivers a sizeable entertaining zone and play space for the kids and the dog, along with a low-key ambience that makes the most of a favourable climate. Anna knew little about plants or gardening, so she called on landscape designer Adam Robinson to realise their vision for a verdant outdoor area. “Adam made it fuss-free for us,” she says. “We showed him some pictures we liked, he presented a really good solution, and we went for it.” The result is a hardworking garden where a lot is packed – but not jammed – into 80 square

metres. The simple layout has multipurpose areas that are ideal for everyone. “From a design viewpoint, it’s straightforward and uncontrived,” says Adam. “In a small space, that’s what you need.” An ample timber deck, allowed to weather to a natural silvery-grey, connects with the house to create an inviting transition between indoors and out, and features an oversized polished-concrete benchtop that’s just the ticket for drinks and nibbles, children’s parties and family meals. “The bench is an amazing use of space,” says Anna. “It’s practical for barbecuing, which my husband does a lot. It’s also large enough to hold all of the food – and keep it away from a greedy dog!” Beneath the countertop, cabinet doors conceal such necessities as a lawnmower, garden equipment, a pram, toys, a paddling pool – and more. It’s a neat storage solution without compromising on style. Hardwood battens filter neighbouring views and ensure some privacy. Slender weaver’s bamboo supplements the screening and continues around the boundary, with giant bird of paradise,

PHOTOGRAPHY: (BIRD OF PARADISE) ALAMY; (NOMAH) LOUNGE, 'HEAVEN' ARMCHAIR, 'NYR' UMBRELLA STAND, 'BYRON' BEANBAG & SCATTER CUSHIONS, 'ECO' OUTDOOR, 'ECOOUTDOOR.COM.AU'; 'JIL' COFFEE TABLE, 'TAIT' MADEBYTAIT.COM.AU; TERRAZZO POT (ON TABLE), ZAKKIA, ZAKKIA.COM.AU; UMBRELLA, COSH LIVING, COSHLIVING.COM.AU



“With this size of area, you can make it look like a courtyard or a garden. This one feels like a garden”

ADAM ROBINSON, LANDSCAPE DESIGNER



coast banksia and olive trees boosting the sanctuary-like feel. The tall greenery provides a visual link to the gum and palm trees in the rear lane, adding to the urban canopy and overall sense of space. Anna loves the sound of the trees and birds being so close.

The boundary plantings have been positioned in seemingly haphazard fashion to keep the overall look casual, while varied leaf textures generate an engaging green-on-green palette, enlivened by touches of silver foliage from helichrysum, olives and coast banksia. Native violets, *Philodendron* ‘Xanadu’, raphiolepis and jade plant populate the ground beneath the screening plants, further enhancing the textural contrasts and differing heights of the greenery. There is scant bulk at mid-level in the plantings, which makes the garden feel roomy, understated and enticing. Sandstone pavers set into the lawn invite you to step off the deck and into the garden proper, where a pull-out clothesline and Betsy’s kennel are carefully concealed. The sandstone was salvaged from the original house foundations, and blocks of it also line the edge of the deck.

The tones are all very natural and muted, and the sandstone and timber form a lovely synergy. Adam designed the garden this way, to be low-drama and pared-back in keeping with the interior palette. “Adam translated our very basic gardening knowledge into something that not only looks fantastic, but works so well in so many ways,” says Anna. All in all, mission accomplished, complete with Betsy’s approval! **10**

To see more of Adam’s work; visit adamrobinsondesign.com. The garden was installed by Mahony Group at themahonygroup.com.au.



DECK (opposite & this page)

Terracotta and concrete planters add interest and muted colour against the expanse of greenery. An easy-care jade plant and dwarf snake plant provide sculptural texture. Weathered timber screening around the entertaining zone allows light to filter through, ensuring the space feels open and airy. Silvery *Crassula ovata* ‘Blue Bird’ and a spiky leaf dragon tree help to soften the hard lines of the fencing.