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PRETTY UPDATES FOR SMALL SPACES

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SEPTEMBER

Decorating & design

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Lovingly tended by its current caretaker, Anna van der Garding, Sydney's historic Bronte House is a joy to behold inside and out. Join us for a tour on page 22.



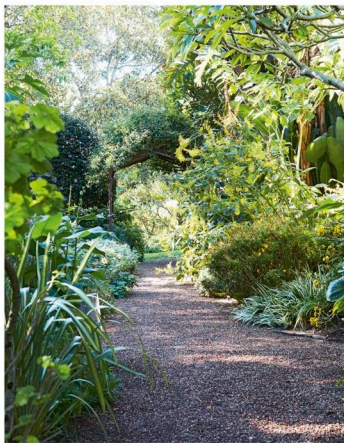
Custodian Anna van der Gardner strolls along one of the pathways in the historic Sydney garden, under arches laden with roses and other sweet-smelling climbers. Purple *Salvia leucantha* 'Santa Barbara' is in flower here for much of the year. ▶

H&G AT HOME WITH

ESTATE OF MIND

The new occupants of Sydney's Bronte House have brightened the interiors with soft coastal colours and botanical designs inspired by its magnificent location.

STORY *Nerida Piggitt* | STYLING *Kate Nixon* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Prue Ruscoe*



“You have to throw yourself into a garden like this,” says Anna van der Gardner, current tenant of Bronte House with her husband Wes and two daughters. This is a serious gardener’s garden, full of history and rare plants, on a vast scale. “It is a big responsibility,” she says. “But we feel it responds to the love and care we give it.”

Covering two acres (0.8ha), the garden rambles across a gully close to Bronte Beach, protected by some of the original trees planted by Georgiana Lowe, the first homeowner, in the 1840s. Leo Schofield made the garden great again during his 10-year lease from 1994, working with designer Myles Baldwin.

Each part of the garden has its own character, from the Lovers’ Walk (named by Georgiana) running under tall trees carpeted with thousands of clivias, to the lawns of the eastern terrace (facing the sea) and a succulent garden and rockery inspired by the Jardin Exotique in Monaco. The Carriageway Border features thoughtful planting combinations of unusual perennials and shrubs such as wigandia (*Wigandia caracasana*) and mist flower (*Bartlettina sordida*), which bears mauve blooms in September.

Following Leo’s tenancy, there was a major restoration of the house by Waverley Council, which owns the Bronte House estate,

after which the garden, too, was again in need of love and rejuvenation. Anna and Wes have supplied that in spades.

“Gardens are evolving things, so they always require new ideas,” says Anna. She inherited a passion for gardening from her mother and trained as a florist before transitioning to interior design. Though the subtropical, flower-rich plantings of Bronte House are a change from the green palette of her previous gardens, she has embraced it. “All the different areas are so beautiful, and offer flowers at different times of the year. We love the excitement of the queen of the night cactus (*Epiphyllum hylocereus*), which climbs up through the frangipani tree and only flowers between dusk and dawn. Now I love going to rare plant fairs and finding special little things to bring home.”

Such a large and important garden needs professional assistance, so Anna brought in Nicola Cameron and her award-winning team at Pepo Botanic Design. “It’s a thrill working in such a special environment,” says Nicola. “With its amazing collection of plants suited to coastal Sydney, this is like a botanic garden. For anyone who wanders through, there’s so much inspiration. In spring, it’s breathtaking.”

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Pepo Botanic Design; (02) 9349 1220 or pepo.com.au.

ABOVE LEFT A rich mix of foliage and flowers makes this a paradise for plant lovers. Proceeds from the last open day enabled Anna to buy a shredder, which has meant all the green waste from the garden can be kept on site. **ABOVE RIGHT** The east-facing lawn is just the place for morning tea.

OPPOSITE This yellow and white border contains many rare and fragrant plants, including *Salvia madrensis* ‘Yellow Majesty’, giant leopard plant (*Furcigium japonicum* var. *giganteum*), variegated *Iris germanica* and a yellow angel’s trumpet (*Brugmansia aurea*). To see inside Bronte House, turn to page 22.



A plan for all SEASONS

The 19th-century garden at Bronte House was one of NSW's most exceptional. Now in the care of the aptly named van der Gardners, its future is back on track.

STORY *Helen Young* PHOTOGRAPHY *Prue Ruscoe*

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a long-sleeved, floor-length blue dress with a white geometric pattern, stands on a gravel path in a lush garden. She is looking back over her shoulder towards the camera. The path is framed by a dark wooden archway heavily covered in green vines and leaves. The garden is filled with various plants, including large green leaves, purple flowers, and a large white bush in the foreground. The background shows more dense foliage and a glimpse of a building.

'We have a little estate of 42 acres, four miles from Sydney on the sea; it is lovely beyond conception.'

Georgiana Love, original homeowner, 1840s

YOU'RE INVITED

The next scheduled open day at Bronte House is September 17, 2017, from 10am-2pm. For more information, visit www.nsw.gov.au or Aynsie's Instagram account @thedesigntarn.



FRONT GARDEN The north-west verandah is where I like to do my potting," says Anna van der Gardner, surveying the grounds of the historic property from the front hall. This colonial-era estate is listed on the National Trust and NSW State Heritage registers and Anna's family is on an extended lease. First laid out in the 1840s, the beautiful gardens are maintained by the van der Gardners in conjunction with a landscape design firm. ▶



EASTERN VERANDAH Laid with classic tessellated tiles, this shaded stretch enjoys ocean views filtered through the trees. In the 1840s, Georgiana Lowe wrote to her mother about the original property, saying, "We have a beautiful bay to ourselves [Bronte Beach]; we have a waterfall of sixty feet and this runs through a fine valley [Bronte Gully]." Woven armchairs, The Country Trader. For similar wrought-iron bench, try Le Forge. **EASTERN LAWN** Anna watches daughters Ada (left) and Lillie enjoying what must seem like boundless outdoor space. Play tent, Mokka. **EASTERN FACADE** Elaborate detailing – such as the hexagonal corner turret and arched window detail – speaks to the 19th-century fascination with gothic architectural features. The house actually has two 'fronts' and impresses from both sides. Armchairs, The Country Trader. Planter pots, Villa Maison. **GARDEN PATH** Anna walks through a bower surrounded by trees and plants tended by the van der Gardners, with regular help from Pepo Botanic Design. To see more of this historic garden, turn to page 128. For *Where to Buy*, see page 221. H&G

ENTRY Anna has lightened the interior colour palette considerably, incorporating the existing hand-painted canvas wallcovering in the hall into her design (see page 226 for details). Through french doors with a fanlight, this space looks across the lawn to the very 20th-century double garage. Console table, OneWorld Collection. Bench, Villa Maison. Cushions, Bandhini Homewear Design. **DINING DETAIL** A Bethany Linz artwork takes up the botanical theme. Lamp, Émac & Lawton. For similar clove, try Provincial Home Living.





'When people visit the garden, hopefully they will see that every part has been touched and loved.' Anna van der Gardner

You're invited

The next scheduled open day at Bronte House is September 17, 2017. For more information, go to waverley.nsw.gov.au or Anna's Instagram account @thedesigbarn.