

AUSTRALIAN

# HOUSE & GARDEN

70  
years of  
AUSTRALIAN  
HOMES

## BE OUR GUEST

CHEFS' TIPS, INVITING SPACES, ITALIAN FARE

*Hot & spicy*  
Palettes to savour

MARVELS  
FROM MILAN  
LOOKS WE LOVE

*Fresh sheets!*  
MAKE A BED  
THAT BECKONS

\*T&CS APPLY PG16  
AUSTRALIA ONLY

## Winter WONDERLAND

SET UP AN INVITING HOME FOR GOOD TIMES YEAR ROUND





*How to create*  
**A HAPPY MIX**

A sunny veggie patch is a favourite destination point in this Sydney garden, where a swimming pool and entertaining area also gently coexist.

STORY *Elizabeth Wilson* | PHOTOGRAPHY *Natalie Hunfalvay*



### Going native

The pool fence is fringed with native grass lomandra and kangaroo paw. The white-trunked tree in the foreground is a water gum (*Tristaniopsis laurina* 'Luscious').



NICOLA CAMERON

Director,  
Pepo Botanic Design

### The brief

When Isabella and Matthew returned to Australia from the UK with their two young children, they set their sights on finding a home with ample outdoor space "so we could spend more time in the sunshine", says Isabella. They found their answer: a Federation house with a 12x22m backyard and pool in Sydney's inner west. But a few things needed tweaking: there was boggy lawn around the pool and the back patio was more a thoroughfare than a sitting area. As keen but time-poor gardeners, the couple were seeking a low-maintenance garden with a veggie patch so they could teach their children about growing food.

### The solution

To redirect foot traffic, Nicola relocated the pool gate and installed a central set of limestone steps, reinforcing the status of the pergola as a sitting area. By using a mix of Australian natives and exotics in simple, repeat plantings, she has ensured the garden is both structured and low maintenance. The boggy lawn around the pool has been replaced with pavers and beds of hardy plants, and a generous, raised vegetable garden has pride of place in a sunny rear pocket.

### Designer statement

"I love that this garden flows in such a functional and visual way. It's a happy family garden." ▶

### Screen queen

A dense screen of passionfruit vine helps hide the garden shed. Nicola has used two layers of reinforcing mesh as the climbing frame. "The double thick mesh means the passionfruit grows very thick."

### Raised expectations

"By raising these beds, we could fill them with growing media perfect for vegies," says Nicola. "It also makes them a strong feature of the garden and prevents vegetables from spilling out into other beds."

### Stacks of style

The 4x3m garden bed is made from stacked, recycled ironbark railway sleepers, their rustic appearance perfectly suited to the garden's relaxed style. The veggie patch is surrounded by a gravel path for ease of access.

### Patch to plate

"We always have herbs growing and try different vegies throughout the year, including a whole lot of tomato varieties," says Isabella. "The children love to eat the tiny tomatoes right off the vine."



## NEW DIRECTION

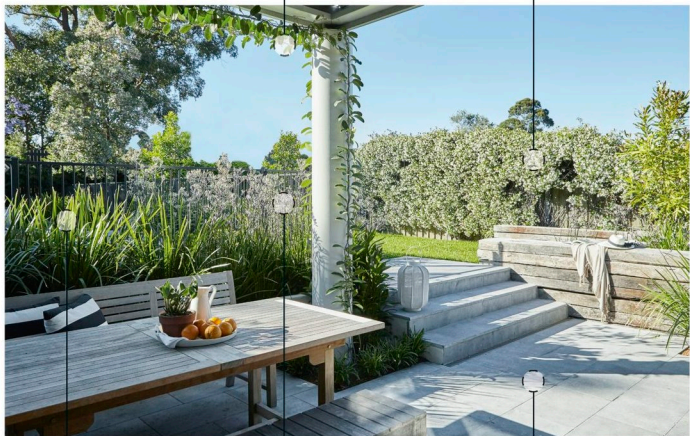
Previously, access to the pool was via the pergola, which meant a constant stampede of little feet through the outdoor dining area. Nicola's team installed a new pool fence, moved the pool entry and repaved the whole area. "It works so well now," says Isabella. "It's like having another room in the house." Growing on the outside of the pool fence (left) are *Lomandra* 'Katie Belles' and kangaroo paw (*Anigozanthos flavidus* 'Landscape Lilac'); on the inside are *Babingtonia virgata* 'Dwarf' and mounds of *Westringia* 'Aussie Box'.

### Strong climber

Scaling the pergola post is fragrant, white-flowering *Stephanotis floribunda*. "We wanted something scented, with a strong form that would not be messy," says Nicola. "This ticks all the boxes."

### Border protection

Pre-existing hedges of star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) grow along the side fences, a soft backdrop to the new garden. The lawn is Sir Walter buffalo, described by Nicola as "tough and bouncy".



### Sweeping beauty

"Isabella and Matthew are gentle people, and we wanted to reflect that with a garden of soft colours and sweeping layers of plants," says Nicola. "It's lovely when all the grasses sway in the breeze."

### Garden of contrasts

"I love that the garden is robust in its materials and plantings but also has gentle surprises, like when the purple-tinged kangaroo paw flowers at the same time as the neighbour's jacaranda," says Nicola.

### Pave the way

The 600x400mm pavers are sandblasted Anamur limestone from Marble Matters. "With the paving in light grey, we wanted to keep the plant palette to mauve, greys, green-yellow and white," Nicola explains.

*Craving a productive garden? Nicola offers some food for thought:*

- ✦ Salad vegies, herbs and fruit vines are generally easy to grow. They can be grown in pots of any size.
- ✦ A true vegetable garden is more of a commitment as crops need to be seasonally rotated and the soil prepared for each.
- ✦ A vegie garden with rotating crops requires a minimum plot of 2m<sup>2</sup>.
- ✦ Most vegies need at least four hours of sun per day.
- ✦ Take the time to research the soil-nutrient, light and watering requirements of everything you grow. **H&G**

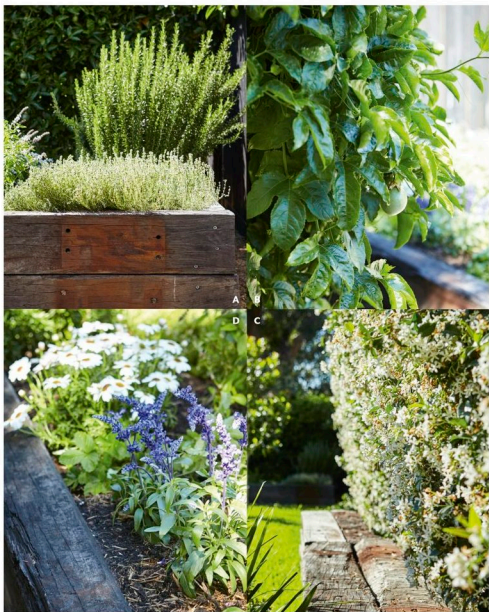
**A** Rosemary and thyme thrive in their raised planter.

**B** The prolific passionfruit vine.

**C** Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) grows like a thick cloak over the side fences.

**D** Daisies and salvias have been planted in order to attract and sustain bees and butterflies.

**Pepo Botanic Design,**  
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[pepo.com.au](http://pepo.com.au).



- 1 Paved pergola
- 2 Steps to garden
- 3 *Lomandra* 'Katie Belles' and kangaroo paw
- 4 Swimming pool
- 5 Outdoor seating
- 6 Garden shed
- 7 Vegetable bed
- 8 Water gums
- 9 Retaining wall of recycled railway sleepers
- 10 *Westringia fruticosa*