

The Coastal Garden



PHAIDON



Private Garden

Pepo Botanic Design | Sydney, New South Wales, Australia | 2019

Set astride an escarpment overlooking Whale Beach, north of Sydney, is a striking house. Designed in 2007 by acclaimed architect Peter Stutchbury, its enduringly contemporary style continues to complement its owners' lifestyle, with its breathtaking views and invigorating coastal setting. However, the garden had become unmanageable and overrun with weeds. This prompted the owners to engage Pepo Botanic Design, a local firm known for its distinctive plant selections and sculptural artistry. Tasked with revitalizing this steeply sloped location, they were challenged to imbue the garden with renewed character, a strong sense of place, and easier maintenance—while embracing the spectacular view. The solution involves a meticulously planned plantscape to enhance the existing features. These include a pool, lawn, yoga deck, large-scale sculptures, a descending sandstone pathway, and a series of metal rods that trace pathways and accentuate the

hillside's dramatic contours. The first task was to extensively weed the site, taking care not to undermine the stability of the slope. The new planting palette includes environmentally sensitive choices that better reflect endemic plant communities and can cope with the salt-laden winds. Clusters of desert she-oak (*Casuarina glauca* 'Green Wave'), shaped into balls, are interspersed with gymea lily (*Doryanthes excelsa*) and spiny saltbush (*Rhagodia spinescens*). Their primary function is erosion control, but they also offer diverse textures and forms and are low growing enough not to interrupt the view. Beyond the obviously gardened areas, as the land drops more steeply to the beach, there is a revegetation zone that holds in the bank. With this cleverly chosen palette, the garden's long-term resilience is enhanced, alongside a delight in seasonal color, texture, and movement in celebration of the garden's inspiring setting.



← (pages 10 and 11)

The garden was reinvigorated with new plantings that are both functional and appropriate to the site's conditions. Elements, such as the lines of steel rods, add sculptural appeal while also emphasizing the steep incline of the site. Characterful clusters of *Casuarina glauca* 'Green Wave' are shaped into balls to mimic the rocky, undulating landscape, contrasted with clumps of spiny *Lomandra hystrix* 'Katie Belles'.

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Tall trees were avoided to keep the view open and prioritize plantings that create habitats for native birds, while a natural watercourse running through the garden was improved with additional rocks to slow runoff. Large-scale sculptures lead the eye down the slope.

