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FRINGE DWELLERS

This sprawling parklands-like garden is the ideal mountain escape

The fringes of the landscaped spaces that embrace this Mid-Century-inspired home in the Blue Mountains, a favoured treechange destination for Sydneysiders, seamlessly merge with the surrounding bushland, ensuring a strong sense of place. Carved into distinct yet connected garden zones, the landscape has been developed over several years by Shannon Decker, Managing Director of Now & Zen Landscapes, working with the owners.

Rather than diving straight into the design process, the owners wanted to experience all aspects of the property for a few years. "This has proven to be a massive advantage because, as the seasons came and went, we identified a variety of issues, such as leaching and areas of high wind, enabling us to design the evolving landscape with these conditions in mind," says Shannon.

"The driveway garden was one of the first areas we designed. The drive is long so it needed to have a big wow factor and its here that we used many plants that were of Japanese or Chinese origin."

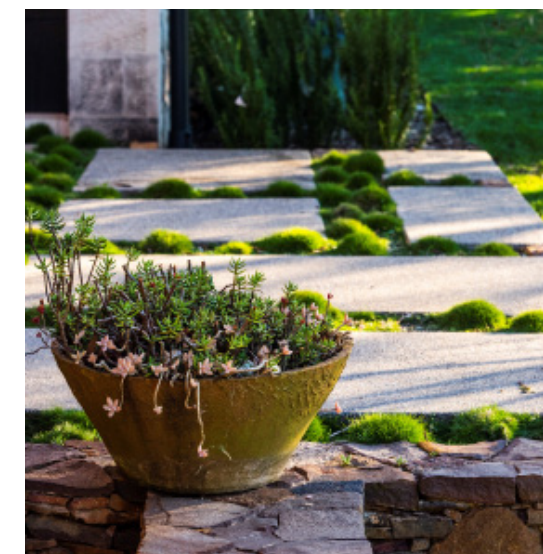
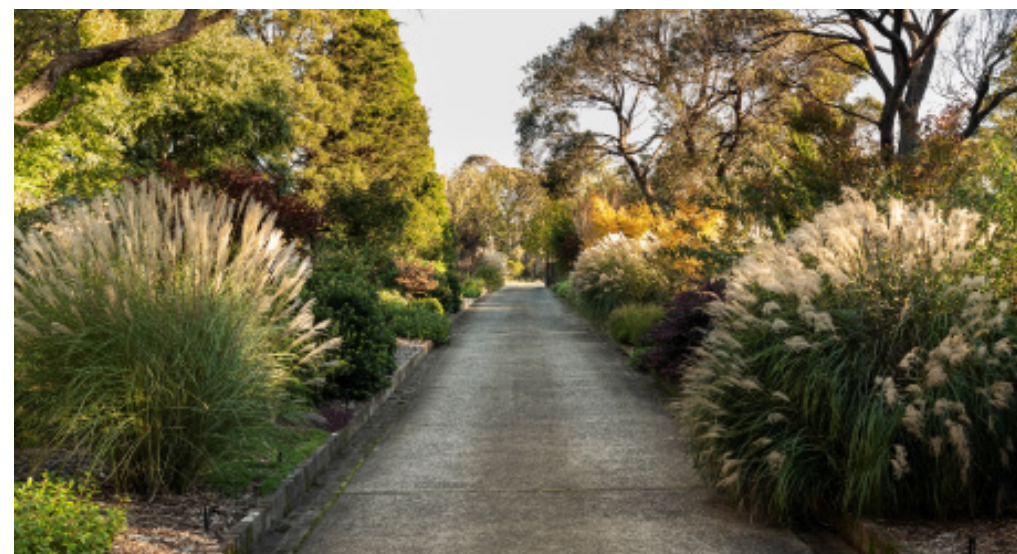
These include *Acer palmatum* (Japanese maple), *Loropetalum chinense* (Chinese fringe flower), *Osmanthus fragrans* (sweet osmanthus), *Azalea kurume* (kurume azalea), *Miscanthus sinensis* (Chinese silver grass), *Ulmus parvifolia* (Chinese elm) and *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Nana' (dwarf mondo grass), as well plants that hail from other parts of the world, such as *Choisya ternata* (Mexican orange blossom), and *Buxus sempervirens* (box) topiarised into balls.

"Entrance to the driveway is through spectacular hand-forged steel gates produced by a local artisan. These are set within curved recycled brick and sandstone-clad walls," says Shannon.

"To create level areas and help shape the contours of the land in the parkland-style gardens, hand-shaped ironstone bookleaf retaining walls are used throughout the property," he adds. "Exposed aggregate concrete paths provide safe access around the house and studio."

For the studio garden, Now & Zen planted a privacy hedge of *Photinia* 'Red Robin' (red tip photonia) above a sandstone retaining wall and to partially block the setting western sun, and add a feature, an *Acer platanooides* 'Crimson Century' (a compact maple with purple foliage).

The covered entertaining area located at the rear of the house offers bush views and faces a garden in which random square sections of exposed aggregate concrete paving are planted with Zoisya grass. There are also Japanese maples underplanted with colourful kurume



azaleas, *Cyclamen persicum* (cyclamen) and *Viola hederacea* (native violet).

In the front-of-house gardens drifts of *Pennisetum alopecuroides* (fountain grass) and *Carex* (sedge) flow beneath existing *Prunus pendula* (weeping cherries) and a newly-planted standard *Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropurpurea' (copper beech), among other exotic species.

As for the fringe gardens, they mainly feature natives, such as *Banksia serrata* (saw banksia), *Dianella* (flax lilies) and *Casurina* 'Cousin It' (she-oak), to marry them with the surrounding bushland.

In the 2022 TLA Landscape Excellence Awards, this immaculately kept garden won a Silver Award in the Residential Maintenance Over 1000sqm category.

CONTACT DETAILS

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