



MODERN MAKEOVER

A cost-effective makeover turns a wasted space into an appealing entertaining area

Words: Karen Booth
Photos: Bruce Usher

Although diminutive, this urban courtyard has everything the owner, a busy senior executive, needs. Tucked into the 6m x 4m space there is a barbecue, in-built seating, concealed storage for outdoor accessories and room for a dining table and chairs.

Designer Steve Warner of Sydney's Outhouse Design describes the project as "a contemporary inner-city courtyard which combines clean lines with a warm, naturally coloured and textured palette. This space can be intimate or accommodate groups, and its low maintenance ensures it is an ideal extension to the home for entertaining in the evening".

To keep costs to a minimum, Steve created a design that sought to modernise some elements rather than replace them. "The original barbecue had a terracotta tiled surface," he explains. "This was given a modern makeover with a granite bench top complemented by a matching splashback and edging.

"The existing boundary wall had an intrusive footing," he continues, "so a bench seat had to be created around the shape with seating precisely contoured to ensure comfort. As the

owner likes to entertain, providing additional seating for parties was paramount."

Low-voltage lighting was recessed into the top of the custom-made bench seating, which works in tandem with the uplighting to the stack stone feature walling to give the space a distinctive ambience at night.

In such a small space, introducing clever places to store essentials was always going to be critically important — hence the under-bench storage.

Natureed screening helps to increase privacy while still allowing filtered light to enter the space. Large-format pavers in a light natural colour give the courtyard a more open feel and complement the internal floor finishes, easing the visual transition between interior and exterior spaces.

"The paving was graded so that as much surface water as possible would be directed into the newly installed garden beds and any excess water would be directed into the existing sub-surface drainage system," says Steve.

"A simple plant palette was important as the space was very small and conditions vary from part shade to full sun," he adds. "Consistent colour and planting help to create a sense of space and harmony. The main fence boundary wall will eventually be covered with jasmine, creating a scented feature wall which will complement the stack stone wall opposite.

"Strong vertical planting with skyrocket junipers are a necessary contrast to the soft planting of the *Liriope* 'Evergreen Giant'. Neighbouring jacaranda trees help to frame the walls."

To ensure the owner never has to worry about when to water the garden beds, a timed drip irrigation system was installed. ■



