

LIVE IT LOVE IT



As this small ornamental purple plum tree spreads, it will provide welcome shade and a bit more privacy. A tree in this small garden stops nearby two-storey house walls seeming too high and overbearing.

The life-like artificial grass is perfect for this pocket handkerchief patch of green.



Raised beds on both sides overlap the steps so they have a set-in look, and the planting connects across the garden. All planting beds are in the same neutral tones, but with one Stackstone texture contrast.

VITAL DETAILS

As everything is close up, attention to detail is critical, like accurate cuts for the mitre join on the wall capping, and mortaring the wall cladding from behind so it looks like a drystone wall.



keep it simple

This design for a tiny backyard proves that when you keep things simple in your design you make the space versatile, so that adults, children and pets all have equal land rights.

words catherine stewart photos brent wilson



An unobtrusive wall light, incorporated into the rendered wall during construction, shines on the stairs in just the right spot. It's an important safety feature when entertaining.



To avoid the look of a long, blank side fence, it has been stepped out in one panel to make a feature wall. Evergreen, white-flowered star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) and *Mandevilla* 'White Fantasy' (pictured above) will soon cover these walls.

THE GRAND PLAN

Design ingenuity by Steven Warner of Outhouse Designs has turned this little terrace-house courtyard into a real garden that suits backyard entertaining for mum and dad as well as the children and pets. Pathways have been kept clear to access the back lane and external laundry but the space has been broken up with raised garden beds. With added splashes of colour, a variety of interesting textures and plenty of plants, it's an appealing space.

Decking makes a sizeable entertaining zone and also a level play area for the children, and avoids tricky drainage problems. Timber tones are repeated on the back wall and in a handy seat that doubles as a storage box.

get the look

Synthetic grass and a low green hedge are two interesting features here. If you like the idea, here's where to find the fake grass, and some other hedge options.

Synthetic turf

Synthetic turf is a good option for small areas where it's not worth keeping a lawnmower. It's ideal for shady spots and around pools where real grass won't grow. It looks like real grass, and there are varieties that have a few brown-tipped blades for a more authentic look. Expect to pay \$20-\$40 sq m for most types, self-laid; up to \$70 sq m installed. Online, Google 'synthetic turf' or 'synthetic grass'. Here are some suppliers:
 Keeping it Green (NSW & ACT) (02) 6242 0260, www.keepingitgreen.com.au
 Lazy Lawns (Australia-wide) 1300 529 952, www.lazylawns.com.au
 Pro-Tech (eastern states) 1300 554 334, www.protechcorp.com.au
 Synthetic Turf (WA, Sydney) 1300 558 089, www.syntheticurf.com.au

MORE SMALL PLUM COLOURED TREES

- Judas tree (*Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'), 5m
- Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum* 'Atropurpureum'), 3.5m
- Crabapple (Ballerina 'Maypole'), 3.5m

For stockists, contact Flemings, www.flemings.com.au



Lilly pillies

These natives come in a huge range of sizes, included small ones such as 'Little Lucy', 'Petite Blush' and 'Royal Flame' (all forms of *Syzygium luehmannii* which are resistant to psyllid insects, which damage foliage). Other small choices, all based on *Acmena smithii* include 'Allyn Magic' (pictured), 'Dusky' and 'Mini Pilly'. *Syzygium francisii* 'Little Gem' is also recommended.



Gardenias

For a small, white-flowered hedge you could clip back *Gardenia augusta* 'Florida' to 1-1.5m, but there is the naturally smaller-sized *G. radicans* which only gets up to 50cm high and won't need any clipping at all. Its flower display, however, is not as long-lived or as impressive as with 'Florida'.



Buxus

For cooler climate zones, it's hard to beat an English box (*Buxus sempervirens*) hedge for dense evergreen hedging. In warmer spots such as Sydney or Perth, Japanese box (*B. microphylla* var. *japonica*, pictured) is a more robust choice. There's also a dwarf Japanese box (*B. microphylla* var. *microphylla*) that is naturally small-growing and needs less trimming.



Ixora

In the subtropics and tropics, *Ixora* 'Prince of Orange' is so colourful it barely qualifies as a low green hedge, but that doesn't stop it being an ideal choice, as its foliage is dark green and you'll just have to put up with months of rich orange flower colour all through summer! **BBY**

Port wine magnolia

This design includes a low, green hedge of *Magnolia figo*, the port wine magnolia (formerly *Michelia figo*, which might still be the name you'll find on some labels). This plant does hedge well, but it can grow 3-5m tall, so to keep it at the 1-1.5m height used here it will need regular clipping once or twice a year. While it does produce scented flowers (below) which release their scent at night, the regular clipping might cut down flower production. This plant does well in Sydney and loves the warmer climate zones to the north.



Plant file

In a tiny garden, it's best not to have too many different plants. The vase-shaped tree-like ornamental plum is ideal as its canopy doesn't spread until it's beyond head height. Grey-toned foliage like the bird of paradise (*Strelitzia*) is set off well against the plain stained timber background.

TREE: ornamental plum, *Prunus cerasifera* 'Nigra' with underplanting of *Tulbaghia violacea* and *Viola banksii*

HEDGE: *Magnolia figo*

BACK PLANTER: bird of paradise, *Strelitzia juncea* with underplanting of sweet William (*Dianthus* spp.)

