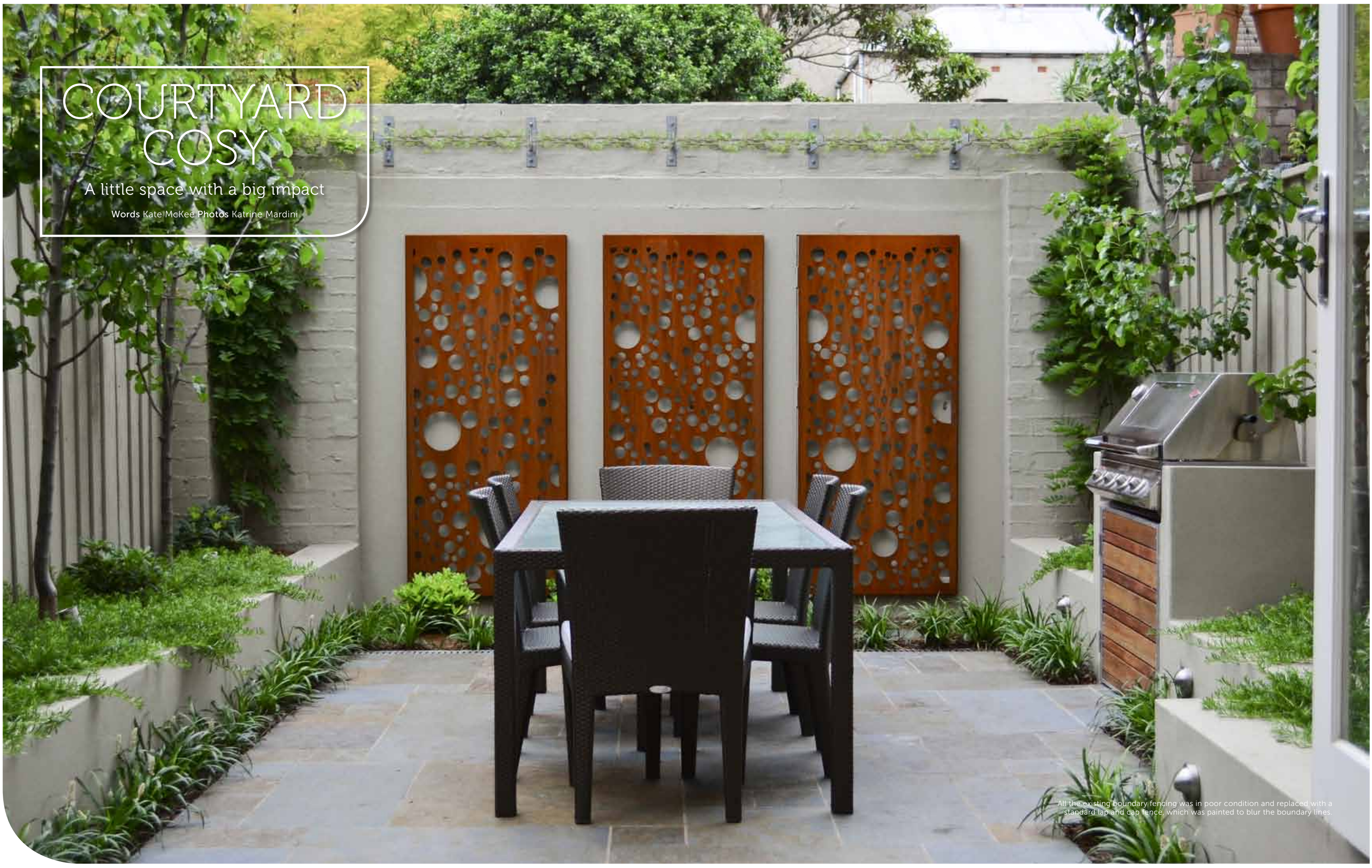


COURTYARD COSY

A little space with a big impact

Words Kate McKee Photos Katrine Mardini

All the existing boundary fencing was in poor condition and replaced with a standard lap and cap fence, which was painted to blur the boundary lines.





TOP The vibrant greens of the new growth *Myoporum parvifolium* 'Yareena' soften the base of the pear trees and its form complements the clean lines of the low walls.

ABOVE A separate small outdoor nook is the perfect place for relaxing with a book or enjoying a catch up with friends. Scented Madagascar Jasmine frames the oversized mirror and wraps around the bi-fold windows.

Originally, this now stunning outdoor room featured an old garage roller door that could be viewed from the main lounge and kitchen area. It was also dark, damp and had a number of palm trees that encouraged bats, and was certainly not a space that you would want to spend any time in.

The main request from the owners given to designer Steve Warner of OUTHOUSE Design was to create a garden room that would feel modern, clean and had a visible feature within it. The owners sought a space to feel proud of when entertaining friends — as opposed to having to firmly shut the curtain to hide views of the garage door!

"The client had a good sense of style, and the internal rooms of the house demonstrated this with clean, minimal design and distinctive personality," says Steve. "I wanted to emulate this feeling in the garden space outside."

There were a couple of small challenges that had to be overcome before the owner's vision was realised however, mainly to do with the issue of parking and removal of the existing palm trees.

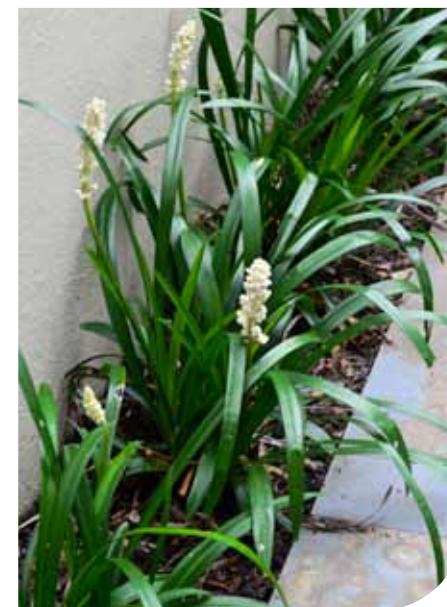
"The client wanted to ensure that if she would like to reinstate the off street parking, she could, so the garden was designed and constructed to specifically cater for this," says Steve. Steve designed the layout of the low garden bed walls to allow ample room for the car. Due to this, the space where the roller door used to be was replaced with a lightweight structure rather than brick, so it could be removed in a cost-effective manner and the drop kerb was retained. "The client placed the roller door and mechanism in storage — as you just never know!" says Steve. It also important for the rear boundary wall to be practical and allow pedestrian access to the rear lane. With this in mind, a secret access door was created with hidden handle and supporting structure. "Attaching a feature panel off centre takes your eye to the feature corten panel and its design, rather than the door," explains Steve.

One of the key challenges faced was the removal of the large palm trees within the space. "Getting the council to remove the palms was never going to be easy, but due to extensive





The colour of the screen is complemented by the green and white planting that lifts from the neutral colours of the fence and pavers.



The paving is a notable feature of the overall design and was selected with the area's dimensions in mind

experience working with local government, we understood and met council requirements," says Steve. "Appropriate tree replacements were recommended and on completion of suitable documentation, permission to remove the palms was granted."

The paving is a notable feature of the overall design and was selected with the area's dimensions in mind. "When designing a small space, it is vital to select the correct paving," Steve says. "For this project, large format modular pavers from Eco Outdoors worked really well, as the colour complements the internal timber floor of the house and the modular layout creates interest without being too busy. The material finish with the Lichen range also reduces glare and heat in summer."

The courtyard's space was a major consideration throughout the design process and decisions were made accordingly. "Even with the smallest of spaces, it is important to try and soften the boundary walls and create a sense of privacy," says Steve, who selected the deciduous *Pyrus Calleryana* 'Capital' pear trees to create year round colour and foliage interest, while still allowing light to enter into the space. "This is a great statement tree," adds Steve. "It is very formal in structure, provides a fantastic outline when uplit and is easy to control in a small space."

The overall planting selection was kept simple with a combination of dark green foliage, white scented flowers and a splash of colour from the *Wisteria sinensis* that was planted on the rear wall to soften the brick boundary. When in full bloom, the scented flowers will drape above the corten screens. Additional plantings include *Pittosporum tobira* 'Dwarf Miss Muffett', as it offers solid all year round flowering and strong

form that contrasts the clean lines of the garden and *Liriope muscari* 'White Lily Turf' that was used to edge and soften the paving and is hardy in nature.

For the lighting, Steve is of the opinion that less is more. "It's important to position lighting to highlight key objects, but to also create focal points and areas of interest with the shadows that are created. This is displayed when uplighting the rear feature screens," he says. "The position of the uplights create dramatic shadows on the back wall, which draw your eye from the house." The screens were custom designed and fabricated, and create a distinctive view that draws the eye.

The tiny inner courtyard is accessed via the lounge area and, like the main courtyard, was tired, damp and overgrown. "The space was easily transformed by paring it back and simplifying materials and planting selection," says Steve. "Circular paving creates contrast and a sea of crawling ivy softens the space, which makes it more welcoming. It also creates an intimate atmosphere to take time out and get away."

The finished result encompasses clean rendered walls, quality finishes and fresh but simple plantings. ✨

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