

A small or awkward space is no big deal if you utilise smart design.

SIT BACK

This small but gorgeous place to rest is enveloped by greenery



LEFT AND BELOW The feature seat is the focus of this space. ABOVE Blueberry bushes are ideal for a smaller garden. BELOW LEFT *Westringia fruticosa* 'Grey Box' grows beside the bluestone pavers.



Gardenia augusta 'Florida' thrives in this space.

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While the backyards of yore were typically sprawling, with great big lawns, a shed and veggie patch to boot, there's no doubt that modern backyards are getting smaller and smaller. So what do you do with a more confined and often awkward area? Shrinking spaces have prompted landscape designers the world over to bring ingenuity to their garden designs and the results are truly amazing. Of course, bigger isn't always better. A big yard means a lot of upkeep and the average person is time-poor these days. Carefully selected plantings and materials can reduce maintenance considerably and really make the best use of the available space.

Small like many of the homes in the region, this backyard in Leichhardt, a suburb in Sydney's inner west, measures only 3.5m x 5m. "It was





“A modern take on a native bush style, the garden features a relaxed planting scheme”



ABOVE Large bluestone pavers create the illusion that the garden is wider.
LEFT *Tulbaghia violacea*, ‘Society Garlic’ provides a subtle splash of pastel colour.

important to visually stretch the garden and give it a sense of depth and interest,” says principal landscape designer of Outhouse Design, Steve Warner. Above all, the homeowner wanted a space that she could relax in and retreat to for some time out. As is the case with many inner-city areas, privacy was also a major issue. Careful tree selection was very important as Steve had to make sure he was allowing maximum light into the space while still delivering enough height for privacy and, of course, aesthetics. As selection was key, a mature single-leader *Cercis canadensis* was selected for the job.

A very busy executive, the homeowner needed a space where she could entertain friends and family and one in which to “potter around”. She is also a keen gardener and enjoys growing plants, veggies and herbs. However, she is very time-poor, so the garden had to just about take care of itself. This was achieved with all-native planting that requires little to no watering once established. Located at the rear of the property, the garden connects directly to the lounge room with bifold doors, so it needed to provide a great outlook day and night.

A modern take on a native bush style, the garden features a relaxed planting scheme. The garden is chilled “with a sense of fun and style” — an extension of the homeowner’s personality. The feature seat is definitely the focus of the space. “We didn’t want to create a standard bench seat,” says Steve. “It needed to own the space and invite you in.” The strong lines add drama and work well in the garden, while the tactile curves and timber finish suggest a more inviting chaise longue style. The seat also incorporates some much-needed storage boxes.

The garden beds are lined with Corten steel and feature pebble mulch and groundcover bark that allows maximum rain penetration. The garden trellises were made from upcycled reinforcement bars. Given the size of the space, paving dimensions were selected for minimum cuts and wastage. To create the illusion that the garden was wider, 600mm x 400mm bluestone pavers were selected. The colour and finish contrast well with the gravel and foliage texture and don’t overpower the rest of the garden.

“It’s a small working garden which delivers on all aspects for the homeowner,” says Steve. “It gives back from a visual perspective as well as a production point of view. The garden is balanced, looks interesting and, best of all, is inviting. My job is to create a space that the homeowner will engage in and I think this little garden does just that.”