



Urban OASIS

Some out-of-the-box thinking has created a series of modern yet relaxed outdoor living spaces

Words Danielle Townsend | Photos Katrine Mardini



Having moved from a large family home with a high-maintenance garden, the owners wanted the outdoor spaces of their new inner-city Sydney home to be easy to care for and to include a backdrop for a series of contemporary sculptures.

To transform their new garden into one that would be decidedly modern, the owners looked to Steve Warner and the OUTHOUSE design team. The goal? To create spaces for entertaining, visual interest and a seamless connection to the studio above the garage.

The construction was placed in the hands of Simon Munn from Urban Garden Enrichment. The first step was to remove the oversized swimming pool that consumed the garden. "The pool had to go and the layout of the garden had to make it possible to host large gatherings, while still offering an intimate feel," says Steve. "We were able to use the excavated space to our advantage. It allowed us to create two

key spaces, the first being an immediate connection to the internal kitchen."

This cooking and dining area is sheltered by a pergola with a louvred roof and features a built-in barbecue and bar fridge, along with a breakfast bar. "Working with Set in Steel, we selected a worktop colour that would match the paving and mirror the style and depth of the internal worktop," says Steve.

The second space is more intimate and private yet still allows uninterrupted views from the house to the main garden sculpture. "I was inspired by the '70s-style sunken lounge and wanted to create a sense of interest and fun," says Steve. "I love the oversized sunken lounge — it just screams 'sit and chill!'"

Oversized limestone Andorra pavers from Eco Outdoor were laid to give a sense of space, visually stretching the garden from left to right. To connect the upper level and the lower sunken garden, metal support bars were installed to enable the wide steps to appear as if they are floating. "This looks





amazing when uplit in the evening,” says Steve.

The plant palette was just as well considered and includes *Syzygium australe* and *Viburnum tinus* hedging, *Malus atrosanguinea* as a feature tree and the dwarf shrub *Raphiolepis indica* ‘Oriental Pearl’.

For ground cover, there is *Ajuga reptans* and *Dichondra argentea*.

Plants are just as important in the internal garden, where vibrant wall art acts as a focal point. “We wanted to frame the art with a planting combination that would complement the colour of the artwork, so we installed

an Elmhurst system with a mass planting of bromeliads and anthuriums,” says Steve.

Through clever design and out-of-the-box thinking, the owners now have a series of unique garden spaces that complement both their home and lifestyle.

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