

From dreary TO DELIGHTFUL

Inner-city living with privacy and outdoor space ... it is possible with some clever design and a little hard work

Words Cassandra Elliott | Photography Katrine Mardini



Each of these oversized copper planters is uplit, defining its cube-like shape and reflecting the building's architecture. With time, the rich patina of the planters will become more distinct.

Many people spend all their efforts designing and personalising the inside of their homes and neglecting the outdoors. With some clever design choices, you can capitalise on outdoor space and even turn it into an extension of your home.

This Stanmore home was thoughtfully designed inside but outside was dreary and bare until some clever design and a little elbow grease was injected into the space.

The team from OUTHOUSE Design received a brief explaining that this inner-west terrace had recently been transformed with a modern architectural extension to the rear. However, venturing through the character-filled hallway, you were greeted by a paved courtyard that was seriously lacking in style and substance. Even though the owners have a strong sense of style and character, this personality ceased to exist within the concrete courtyard. So, OUTHOUSE Design Principal Designer Steve Warner worked closely with the owners to inject a little of their style and totally transform the space. With project management by Simon Munn at Urban





The overhead structure enables the space to feel personal and intimate whilst still allowing light into the courtyard. It creates a great gathering space or individual getaway, rather than the traditional built-in seat or table and chairs.

Garden, and with the supply and fabrication of the raised planters and overhead structure by PO Box Projects, the garden was brought to life.

The team had a few challenges to face in the creation of this oasis, not least of which was that the surrounding buildings that overshadowed the courtyard created different microclimates as well as privacy issues. For the convenience of inner-city living, privacy is often sacrificed but that doesn't have to be the case — there are smart solutions that can make your space feel beautiful as well as secluded.

“For privacy we designed an overhead structure,” Steve explains. “The selected pattern allows plenty of light into the space, while still creating a sense of privacy. The curved shape of the structure allows for a supportive daybed or seating structure, which is the perfect place to get away for those lazy afternoons.”

The flooring of the courtyard is concrete slab with poor drainage, another challenging

element. As the owners’ value recycled material, the team wanted to incorporate this into their design. The style very much reflects the personality of the owners now, its collective of recycled materials, textures and unique items they’ve purchased on their travels around the world.

The existing fence was in good condition and the rest of the walls are glass, so by planting the low-maintenance ficus climber, the walls appear softer.

“To reuse the existing pavers, we had them cut to fit the new design and no landfill was created as no excavation or waste removal was required from the site and recycled timber and bricks created the water feature,” Steve says. “The raised planters are more efficient to manufacture than creating concrete footings and concrete walls. The overhead structure was manufactured using light gauge materials that give product longevity and no ongoing maintenance”.

All of the planting was selected with ease of care in mind. Draught-hardy, flowering

key shrubs create year-round interest while groundcovers retain moisture within the pots on hot days. Deciduous feature tree planting allows the right balance of natural light in winter and shade in summer, which also cools the house.

“We wanted to ensure we connect with the senses, and as always work to the formula of right plant, right place,” Steve says. “This means we obtain maximum performance and limited maintenance of pest care”.

The water feature creates an extra layer of interest and by constructing it with recycled bricks, it blends with the character of the home and can be viewed from all aspects of the house. Additional lightweight planters are located on the vertical to soften the space and once again create a lush sense of green.

“We seek sustainable solutions for difficult sites, but the best gardens are those created in partnership with our clients,” Steve says. “We want our clients to take ownership of the space, so consultation from all parties is vital for long-term success”.

