



# EAT, PLAY, LOVE

*This urban oasis is filled with a diverse blend of productive plants and natives, a unique haven that continues to evolve*





The Corten steel planters introduce contemporary garden art — both practical and beautiful. They're a timeless feature that will improve with age.



**WORDS:** CARROL BAKER  
**PHOTOS:** NICHOLAS WATT

Step inside this warm and welcoming garden space, close to the hustle and bustle of the city, and stress and worry just seem to melt away. The owners recently renovated their home and wanted to create a calming outdoor haven with a mix of edible plants, native trees and grasses.

Designer Katy Svalbe, from Svalbe & Co, says the rear yard was a sea of grass when she first laid eyes on this Sydney garden. "There was a landing strip of sandstone slabs down its centre and a majestic lemon-scented gum," she recalls. "At its boundaries, new timber fences screamed 'green me'."

And so she did. The garden is filled with textural plants that invite you to reach out and brush your fingers along them. Soft and inviting, the garden is the perfect backdrop for its owners to entertain at home, potter about, and indulge their love of gardening.

In broad strokes the productive edible elements are spread along the left-hand side of the garden, while the native plantings lie to the right. To create privacy and soften the boundary fences, lilly pillies and grevilleas were planted, in addition to passionfruit (*Hibbertia scandens*).

In the front garden, a generous mix of ferns, leucadendrons, and some of the owner's bromeliad collection were planted. "This creates a textural welcome mat that speaks to the delightful tones and colours of the worn path leading to the residence," Katy explains.

In the rear garden, generous curved Corten steel planters seem to rise up from the ground. Katy says the planters help to structure the flow through the garden. "They define 'the garden walk', hold some of the site's level change and introduce warmth, structure and volume," she reveals. The Corten steel will acquire a beautiful patina as it ages and the plants within spill over the sides to meet the native violet and creeping mint-covered stepping blocks below.



The front garden was given some love, too, providing a "textural welcome mat" to the home.

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**LEFT** Repurposed heritage sandstone blocks pave the way around the garden, which is filled with flowing ferns, Australian natives and bountiful fresh produce. **RIGHT** The majestic lemon-scented gum has a striking presence in the garden. The recent home alterations included a glass box to allow uninterrupted views up to its canopy.

When the garden was designed, the existing statuesque trees weighed heavily into the plan, particularly the lemon-scented gum with its beautiful aroma and smooth white and pink-etched bark features; in summer and autumn, feathery white flowers grace its branches.

Recycled sandstone blocks form the pathway to the rear garden and the deck was constructed from recycled milled railway sleepers. "Both materials were chosen for their raw and robust beauty and for their ability to age gracefully," Katy adds.

This eco-friendly, biodiverse garden invites in pollinators and local wildlife, and there's an integrated subsurface drip irrigation system connected to a rainwater tank for watering.

Katy says the garden complements the couple who live there to a tee. "It's meandering, free-spirited and eclectic, much like its owners," she says. As the homeowners travel frequently, the garden was also designed to be low maintenance.

The result is a productive landscape that continues to delight. "The owners adore spending time in their garden and continue to add their own personal touches — both in the form of new plants as well as found objects," Katy concludes. [svalbe.co](http://svalbe.co)

