

HAPPY THOUGHTS

A daring suggestion by the collaborating designers delivered spectacular surroundings for its delighted owners.

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This garden takes its cues from the surrounding coastal landscape. Designers Svable & Co and Even Spaces focused on softening the front facade with mostly native species. A group of coast banksias (*Banksia integrifolia*) is underplanted with *Casuarina 'Cousin It'*, white correa (*Correa alba*), blue fescue grass (*Festuca glauca*) and coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*). Sandstone and timber feature heavily.



The interior design team, YSG Studio, specified timber battens for the balcony and terracotta tiles at the front entrance to add to the home's kerb appeal. **OPPOSITE** Clockwise from top left Two monolithic sandstone slabs flank the timber walkway, giving it a sense of prominence. A creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*) makes its way up the portico. The sitting area features a Reverse 38 conference table by Andreu World and Roda 'Harp 359' armchairs. Native violet (*Viola hederacea*) thrives between the sandstone steppers.



Things don't always go according to plan in a renovation – but that doesn't mean things don't work out for the best. Such was the case when the owners of this home in Sydney's east called landscape designers Katy Svalbe of Svalbe & Co and Eve Valensise of Even Spaces to redesign their outdoor spaces. Their brief? A garden that fostered an indoor-outdoor lifestyle for the young family.

The first challenge for the designers was convincing the owners to downsize the pool. After all, they didn't necessarily sign up for a pool remodel. "It was a bold suggestion to get the owners to fill in part of their pool," says Katy. But, ultimately, it transformed the relationship between the house and garden, improving the flow between the indoors and out and enabling the house to breathe. "It really was a game-changer," says Katy. "It created a generous threshold between the rear of the residence and the pool. Now anchored by a timber boardwalk, the pool really feels like the jewel of the garden."

Next, the focus was on softening the home's facade. "The front elevation of the house was boxy, overbearing, and bland," says Eve. The interior design team, YSG Studio, introduced an ironbark timber screen across the balcony, and this feature is also picked up in the front entry gate. "Timber, terracotta and sandstone are recurring motifs throughout the project, bringing warmth, texture and tonal contrast," says Eve. Inspired by the surrounding coastal landscape, they developed a planting palette that consisted of various natives: swathes of coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*), *Casuarina* 'Cousin It', and white correa (*Correa alba*) punctuated by the striking forms of the coast banksia ▶



“The pool fencing consists of painted steel open uprights to allow the foliage to move through the fence and soften the boundary,” says Katy. “A frameless glass gate was selected to meld with the decking and lead your eye along the edge of the pool to the handrails and the stand of cacti beyond,” adds Eve.

““You don’t need to start with a clean slate. With some thoughtful tweaks, we completely transformed the look of the whole garden.” Katy Svalbe, landscape architect

(*Banksia integrifolia*). “Two monolithic sandstone blocks cut through the planted mounds, framing the path and giving it definition,” says Eve.

As part of the design intent, the creative duo sought to “enhance distinct landscape characters of each space, rather than treat all areas the same.” In the rear garden, they devised a plan to “soften the dominance” of the Leighton Green conifer (*Cupressocyparis leylandii*) hedge. The deep, burgundy shades of *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’ and *Breynia cernua* ‘Ironstone Range’ bring depth and colour, while the silver- and copper tones of *Kalanchoe* ‘Silver Spoons’ and *K. ‘Copper Spoons’* add texture and contrast. “We wanted to provide a contrast in foliage colour and form and bring a more contemporary feel to the garden.”

The courtyard is an extension of the indoor dining area, and the design was inspired by its “environmental quality”. “We wanted this space to be bathed in a lovely, dappled shade during the warmer months of the year and dissolve away to create a protected warm sunny space to lounge in during the cooler months.” To achieve this, they built a timber-framed pergola and trained deciduous Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) to climb up the supports and drape over the rafters, transforming it into an “ephemeral green ceiling”.

The resulting garden is a series of spaces that are highly individual but connect and flow effortlessly - just as a good design should.

Svalbe & Co; svalbe.co; evenspaces.com.au.



DESIGN NOTES
Pool fence Custom designed by Svable & Co and Even Spaces, fabricated by Metrowelding.
Decking and entry gate Custom designed in ironbark by Svable & Co and Even Spaces.
Pavers Terracotta, Bisanna Tiles.
Pebble sculptures Atelier Vierkant, Cosh Living.
Lighting Exterior wall lights, Sphera and Est Lighting.



Feature plants

TREES

- Coast banksia (*Banksia integrifolia*)
- Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy'
- Dwarf date palm (*Phoenix roebelenii*)
- Olive (*Olea europaea*)

CLIMBERS

- Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*)
- Creeping fig (*Ficus pumila*)

SHRUBS

- Chinese fringe flower (*Loropetalum* 'Plum Gorgeous')
- White correa (*Correa alba*)
- Coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*)
- Sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*)

GROUNDCOVERS

- Native violet (*Viola hederacea*)
- Blue fescue (*Festuca glauca*)

Terracotta tiles from Bisanna Tiles are used inside the house and extend into the outdoor entertaining area for continuity. Trace armchair, Tait. Isole coffee table by Paola Lenti. **OPPOSITE** Clockwise from top The deep burgundy foliage of *Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy' creates a lovely textural contrast and draws your eye into the space. A wet bar makes outdoor entertaining easy. Dining table, Coco Republic. Jeanette chairs by Tom Fereday. The bright silver foliage of *Kalanchoe* 'Silver Spoons' pops against the greenery. H&G