



PATCH PERFECT

Marrying the garden design with the architecture of this home and its harbourside location was spot on.

Photographs PRUE RUSCOE Words GEORGINA REID



This page, from top A sculptural mass of Casuarina 'Cousin It' softens the first-floor balcony. The bleached timber deck is punctuated by three sculptural tree aloes (Aloe barberae). Opposite page Dwarf date palms and variegated star jasmine at the entry.



Gardens are not just about the green spaces they contain, but also, importantly, the larger landscape they inhabit. This harbourfront garden, designed by William Dangar, in the Sydney suburb of Mosman is a perfect example of the connection of a garden to the architecture of the house as well as the wider landscape.

The three-storey house, garage and boatshed were extensively renovated by Corben Architects in 2009. New zinc roofs and wall cladding, and sandstone detailing provided William and his team with design inspiration and direction. But the landscape itself was a blank canvas – “There were no plants on site at all!” he says. The project was very much a collaborative affair, with the landscape designer and his team working closely with the architects and clients to ensure the seamless integration of the garden and house.

The clients were great to work with, says William, and were very open with their brief. Their only requests were that the garden be low maintenance, and that it integrated seamlessly with the architecture of their renovated residence.

The site is very steep, dropping away towards the harbour from the street entrance. Addressing the significant level change, and instead of a straight run of stairs to the front door, William created a winding pathway stepping down the site. Drawing on the materials used in the house renovation, he designed a series of zinc-clad planter boxes, which provide valuable planting space as well as a frame for the path and steps. “I wanted the front entry to feel like a journey,” he says. Lush, shade-tolerant tropical planting such as bromeliads, dwarf date palms (*Phoenix roebelenii*), and variegated star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides* ‘Tri-Colour’) were used, providing a sense of softness against the strong and minimal lines of the walls and stairs.

The vast expanse of Sydney Harbour is the star of the show in the rear garden. William’s approach in this area was simple: “We wanted to create an elegant and beautiful harbourside garden. We didn’t want it to be too complicated, to corrupt the most important element of the space which is the view,” he says.

The pool, designed by the architects, runs the length of the garden, connecting the space visually with the harbour. A frangipani tree punctuates the deck at the end of the garden, balancing the space and providing a sense of scale. Lush, layered planting of yucca, evergreen magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora* ‘Teddy Bear’), and lily turf (*Liriope* ‘El Marco’) softens the boundaries and provides privacy for the pool area. Three tree aloes (*Aloe barberae*) grow out of cut-outs in the pool deck, and resemble living sculptures.

Materials in the rear garden were also kept simple – timber decking was used to surround the pool and jetty, and a sandstone block retaining wall runs parallel to the pool. The boathouse, also renovated by the architects, has a green roof designed by William, and an orange trumpet vine (*Pyrostegia venusta*) growing on its wall – again designed to not overcomplicate the view from the residence, and provide a soft green framework to the harbour beyond.

William’s intention with the garden, as well as working with the view, was to “tuck the house into the landscape.” The house sits quite high above the land,” he says. “We designed the garden to make the house feel less dominant.”

The beauty of the design work is a deep understanding of the importance of working within the framework of both the architecture and the site, and the absolute beauty of restraint. This garden illustrates this to a T. It’s elegant, textural and inviting and, as is usual for a William Dangar garden, a sweeping success.

For more go to williamdangar.com.au or visit Georgina Reid’s website, theplantbunter.com.au.



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This page The entry stairs are flanked by dwarf date palms and low zinc-clad retaining walls. Opposite page, from top The pool connects visually with the harbour beyond. William Dangar used layers of green, textural planting to soften the boundaries of this waterfront property.