



Where there's a Will

Sydney landscape designer Will Dangar has created more than 1000 gardens in his 25-year career. A new book paying tribute to his work includes a tour of his own garden, which we share exclusively here...

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A Port Jackson fig stands sentinel in this corner of the back garden. Planted as part of the new design and admired by Will for its sculptural branches, this tree is carefully pruned so it's almost a bonsai form. In the background, just off the deck, is a pizza/tandoori oven. **OPPOSITE** The front entrance to the Dangars' home features a frangipani and a crepe myrtle. The door is painted a custom colour, the perfect foil for the Resene Pitch Black facade. ▶



This is an edited extract from *Garden* by William Dangar (\$59.99, Murdoch Books).



Will Dangar was a country kid, growing up on a grazing property in Armidale, in northern New South Wales. He's now counted among the long-term residents of Sydney's Bondi, having lived there for more than 20 years.

The successful landscape designer's first place was a semi, but more recently he and his family have lived in a house and garden of his own making. Seeing opportunity where others didn't, he bought an unsalvageable California bungalow and set about designing a house and garden as one integrated concept.

While the old house was single storey, the new one is two storeys but with a slightly smaller footprint to make the ratio of garden to house bigger. This is in contrast to many houses, where the structure takes up all the space and the landscaping is the 'icing' around the edges. "It was important to have a lovely relationship between the landscaping and dwelling," says Will.

The garden is in three parts, beginning with the streetscape. "I set the fence back from the footpath in order to plant Australian natives relevant to the area," he explains. "That way, I'm giving

something back to the suburb." The entrance is more exotic, with a frangipani (as favoured by his wife Julia) and crepe myrtle.

The most expressive area of planting is the rear garden, where Will channels Roberto Burle Marx (1909-94), a Brazilian landscape architect who championed Modernist principles of graphic, mass planting. "I wanted to challenge myself and create a garden of predominantly Japanese and northern Asian natives," he says. That required much research on unfamiliar plants such as weeping mulberries, bamboos and Japanese blood grass.

There are two other main elements in the garden: an in-ground trampoline for the kids, and an odd-shaped pond that slides under the deck, creating ambient noise to filter the street sounds.

"Garden design is something that is learned and crafted over time," says Will. "I'm lucky enough to be able to visualise the potential of every site and see clearly where the opportunity lies." And yet Will found designing for himself challenging.

"I was a nightmare client," he says. "I must have done 15 schemes. The good thing is, though, I now realise what my clients go through and I'm a better consultant for it." **H&G**

ABOVE "This is an oddly configured block – it's triangular," says Will. At the apex of the space is the sunken trampoline. The lawn is Sir Walter buffalo, chosen because it thrives in dappled sunlight. **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT** The garden is entirely new except for the jacaranda in the foreground. Recycled railway sleepers have been used to delineate garden beds and create focal points and nooks throughout the garden. Surrounded by star jasmine, a peephole in the side gate hints at the wonders of the rear garden. A hammock is the perfect addition to this shady spot.