



SHORED UP

In this coastal garden, set behind the dunes, drifts of foliage spill over granite boulders that float in the frothy green ocean.

Photography PRUE RUSCOE Words CHRIS PEARSON

These pages The entry landscape, in the garden designed by Dangar Barin Smith, consists of granite boulders wrapped in mass plantings of Asiatic jasmine (*Trachelospermum asiaticum*). Tree aloes (*Aloidendron barberae*), kentia palms (*Howea forsteriana*) and tuckeroo trees (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*) bring scale and filter the elevation of the house designed by MCK Architects.



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These pages, from left A view through the cabana to the pool and the beach beyond. A lone kentia palm (*Howea forsteriana*) provides shadow detail. A variety of textural plants, including cycads, blue ice plant (*Senecio talinoides* 'Icesticks') and New Zealand flax were used along the street elevation. Clumps of viburnum and ornamental ginger plants were placed against the house for scale and *Philodendron xanadu* and New Zealand flax for texture.



Playing with scale and shape, and packed with surprises at every turn, this garden on the New South Wales south coast has a larger-than-life, almost cartoon-like quality. "It has a fantasy feel, with the tree aloes a bit like the drawings of Dr Seuss," says William Dangar of Dangar Barin Smith, who created this fanciful world with his colleague Simon Howard. "It's whimsical and eclectic," says Simon. Occupying three residential blocks fused into one, the garden, begun in 2015 and completed with the house in 2017, sprawls over the seaside site, allowing room for a tennis court to the south and dense screening from the neighbours and a public walkway that brushes its margins.

North of the boundary is council bushland which, says Will, needed to be accommodated to form a visual part of the garden. The property also fronts onto the beach to the east, separated by a buffer of dunes, which the pair would work into the plantings on that side. Proximity to the beach was a plus and a minus – while it's a breeze for the surf-loving owners to wander down to the sand, exposure to salt and wind would require robust, rugged plantings.

While the owners initially specified tropical foliage, Will steered them to something more unpredictable and diverse, "which they love", he says. Natives, such as coast banksias (*Banksia integrifolia*), tuckeroo trees (*Cupaniopsis anacardioides*) and *Lomandra longifolia* grasses brush branches and fronds with tropical kentia palms (*Howea forsteriana*), cycads and birds-of-paradise, together with the subtropical tree aloes (*Aloidendron barberae*) that set the tone at the entry. By further contrast, a huge Norfolk Island pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*), retained in the new garden, makes a bold statement on the rear lawn. Sweeping lawns for

children's play lap up against the northern native bushland and eastern dune vegetation with their swathes of fresh plantings, so that new and old meld seamlessly into one. Just as Will and Simon's imaginations have run free, so does this property which has no boundary fence and ebbs and flows from private space to public.

"The house was positioned towards the front of the block so the area was fully planted as a deep garden for interest and privacy from the street without hedges," says Simon. "There is no fence, just carefully thought-out planting," adds Will. Meanwhile, a central courtyard is a haven for shade-loving plants such as kentia palms which reach skywards through the opening above.

Recycled hardwood sleepers form broad steps from the road to the elevated entry, while sawn log steppers interplanted with a dense carpet of Asiatic jasmine lead visitors into the house from the driveway. Peppered throughout, huge granite boulders in a beguiling assortment of shapes lend a sense of the unexpected and complement the oversized plantings and layered textures.

Tree aloes and kentia palms lend height, underplanted with dense drifts of flax and cycads at the mid-level, while floes of Asiatic jasmine and swamp oak (*Casuarina glauca* 'Cousin It') lend lushness at ground level so the eye is constantly enticed from one space to the next. The result is a garden that makes an expressive, quirky statement in a language distinctly its own.

Will, who has been a fan of Dr Seuss since childhood and now reads the books to his children, could well have been inspired by one of the author's best-known quotes: "I speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues". dangarbarinsmith.com.au

GARDEN



This page, from top Mature kentia palms were planted on the eastern side of the garden around the pool and spa. A timber planter filled with mother-in-law's tongue (*Sansevieria trifasciata*) acts as a pool fence as well as housing an outdoor television that can be viewed from the spa. Recycled hardwood sleepers lead to the front door. Tree aloes underplanted with Asiatic jasmine add drama. To create a link from the driveway to the front door, log steppers were added, with Asiatic jasmine planted as a ground cover between.

