



Gardens for life

Have you fallen out of love with your outdoor space? Here's how to realise its full potential

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A GARDEN SHOULD BE a peaceful, relaxing and rejuvenating space, a haven to which to return at the end of a busy day. It's important to ensure your garden works with your lifestyle; there's little point having a high-maintenance, demanding space, full of delicate plants that require round-the-clock care if your time is taken up with work and family.

First, focus on your interests and needs. Do you have young children who want to run around? Do you love cooking and hope to grow your own vegies? Are you keen to create an outdoor oasis, or do you just like to potter about on weekends? Next, think about how much time you can dedicate to your garden and the materials and plants you'll need to get it just right.

We've put together our top tips to get you started. Then, read on for five real-life gardens to inspire you to make the most of your outdoor space.



party people
Regular entertainers know it's best to be well prepared to take the hassle out of hosting. First, you'll need an outdoor dining room, close to the kitchen and big enough for your crowd. A covered area lets you use the space all year round. If you love entertaining alfresco and have the space, think about an outdoor kitchen with a barbecue, fridge and sink. A great set of speakers will lend ambience – as would a fire pit. Check out bio-ethanol fires or, if you choose to get a woodburner, aim to feed it with sustainably sourced firewood.

hand to mouth
There's nothing more rewarding than cooking with your own produce. However, before converting your entire backyard into a vegetable garden, consider how much time each week you can allocate to maintaining it. Production gardens are a lot more work than purely ornamental ones as they require more fertiliser and water to produce healthy fruit and vegetables.

A better option might be to incorporate a bit of grow-your-own goodness by planting herbs and vegetables for both their aesthetic and practical value. Don't just stick them down the back corner in a dedicated vegie patch; instead, make them the central focus. For example, rosemary makes a great hedge; thyme looks wonderful growing among stepping stones; beans are beautiful meandering up a trellis; and vegies such as kale, chilli and various types of salad leaves add splashes of colour. Mixing and matching, rather than growing everything in rows, can give a vegie garden the appearance of a handsome herbaceous border! >



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