

The backlit, laser-cut Corten screen at the end of the garden has an appealing natural rust finish.

Tropical twist

Fresh, funky and family friendly, this rear garden provides a taste of the tropics



ABOVE To soften the space, the new garden bed was subtly outlined with gently curving aluminium edging.

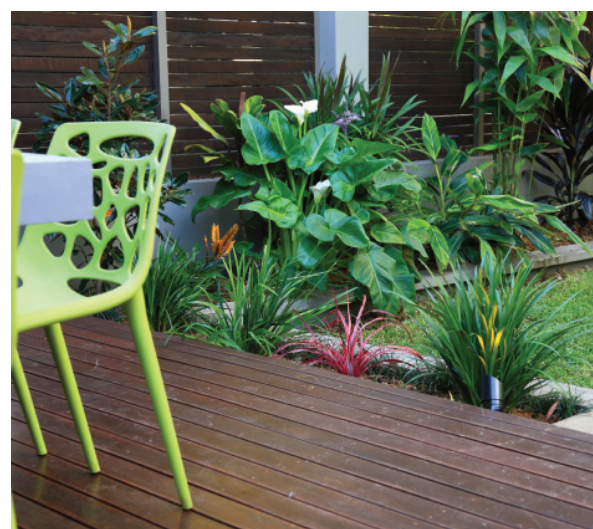
RIGHT The existing timber-edged beds were given a new lease on life with a flourishing new plant palette.

WORDS: Erina Starkey **PHOTOS:** Peter Brennan

To create a backyard that perfectly captures the personality and lifestyle of the owners, sometimes you need to think outside the square — or in this case, the rectangle. When presented with a long and narrow rear garden comprised of a new lawn and several existing, highly angular features, Kev

Quelch from inovasis design decided to bring everything together through a lush, tropical plantscape, which would “green” the rectangular space and soften the hard lines.

The homeowners requested inovasis design retain the garden’s existing features, such as the merbau deck and the walling, working around and adapting these predefined elements. This was made possible through the tropical garden concept, which offered a relaxed and less-formal solution for producing a coherent, holistic design. However, this approach was not without its challenges. “As the majority of the established trees were to stay, this



“An innovative and inclusive design that meets the family’s every need”



ABOVE Plants of different heights were used to create the layered effect expected of a tropical garden.

LEFT So the family’s son had somewhere to play, creating as large a lawn as possible was a main priority.



meant we had to be cautious of potential root competition for new plantings,” says Kev. Also, tropical planting usually requires the creation of deep garden beds to get maximum layering but, in this case, the owners wanted the lawn to be as large as possible.

Kev decided upon a mix of native and exotic plants with striking foliage, such as cordylines, birds nest fern, golden cane palms, elephant’s ears, turf lily, slender weaver’s bamboo and tiger grass. These were then interspersed with flowering plants, such as white calla lilies, clivias, *Magnolia* ‘Little Gem’ and various gingers, which offer seasonal splashes of colour, contrast and interest. As ground cover, mondo grass and native violets were employed. The combination of foliage and floral-centric plants worked together to produce a range of heights, colours and textures, creating a richly layered tropical jungle effect.

The plants wrap around the perimeter of the garden, in the centre of which is a large, level lawn that provides a safe and open space where the owners’ son can play. While the rectilinear shape of the lawn offered some resistance to the creation of a casual tropical ambience, curved aluminium garden edging was incorporated along one side to soften the look and gently contrast the angularity of the deck and timber edging.

To turn the deck into a great space for entertaining and bring some of the colours from the garden to the dining space, it was furnished with an urban-grey table made



ABOVE Contemporary with a tropical twist, this newly landscaped backyard suits adults and children alike.

RIGHT The deck was furnished with a contemporary table made of GRC and fun dining chairs in lime green.

out of glass-reinforced concrete (GRC) and teamed with funky chairs in luscious lime. A contemporary tropical feel was also encouraged into the garden with the potted frangipani and cordyline that flank the dining area and help to define the adult entertaining space.

At the far end of the garden, a stunning laser-cut Corten steel feature screen was installed, providing a focal point that can be enjoyed from the deck or when looking out from inside the two-storey home. The screen, which is backlit for added effect, was also installed to add warmth and textural interest to an otherwise soft-scaped area.

"We approach each landscape design holistically and invest time with the homeowners to ensure we create beautiful, functional outdoor spaces that reflect their lifestyle, while ensuring the constraints of the site are met," says Kev. And it seems this is an approach that has reaped rewards in the form of an innovative and inclusive design that meets the family's every need. ■

