

IN THE ZONE

A dangerous, messy and unusable space is turned into a magnificent garden





Firewood storage is located underneath the steps leading to the deck.



Pebbles create interest and texture in this garden bed.

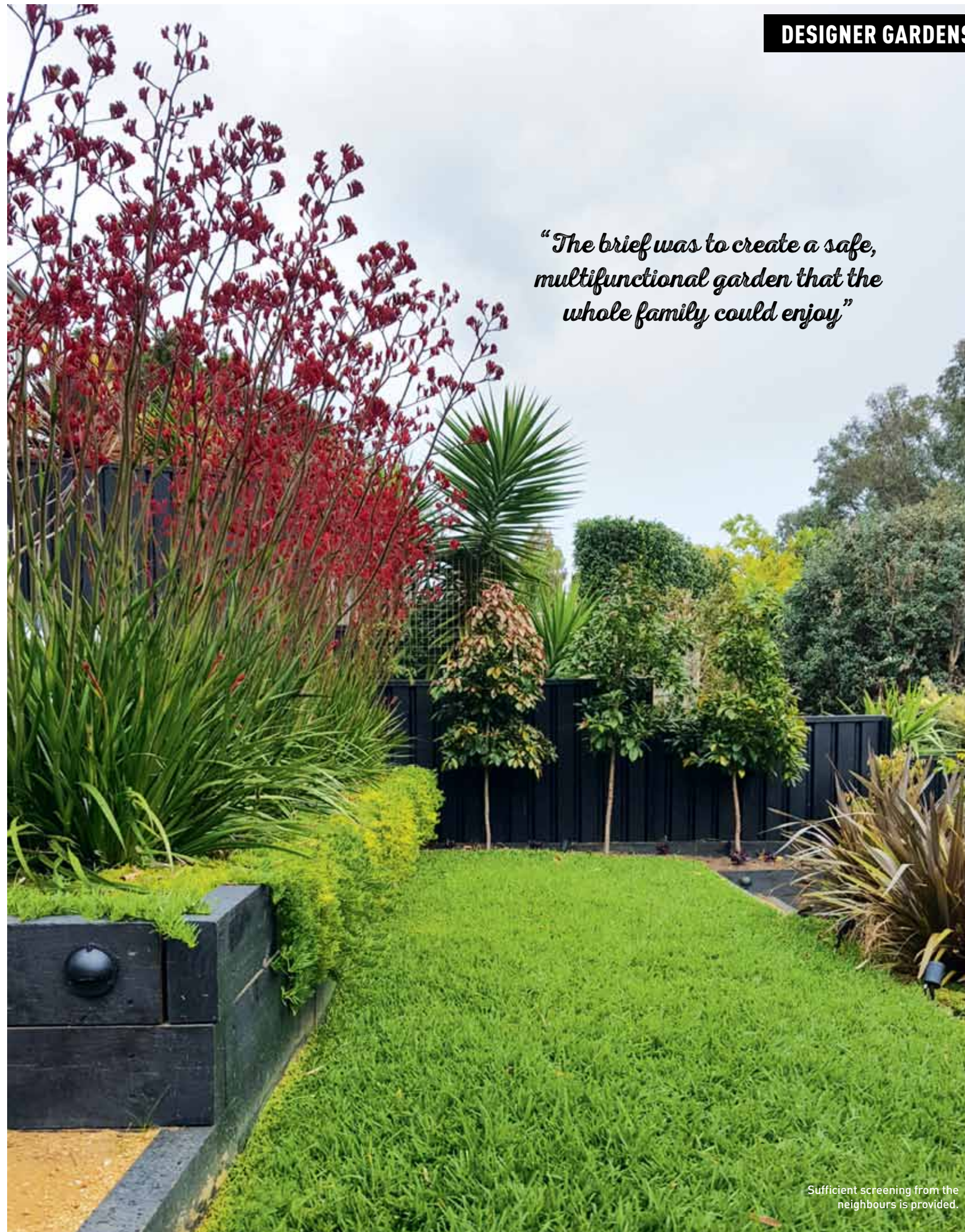
WORDS: APRIL OSSINGTON
PHOTOS: KEVIN QUELCH

Landscape design is all about making a space more usable and, of course, more beautiful in the process and there's no doubt this property in Bardwell Valley, NSW required more than a little TLC.

"When the homeowners first walked into their finished garden, they said it was the first time they'd seen the new extension from the rear of their house as they'd been too scared to enter the garden before," recalls Kevin Quelch, landscape designer and owner of inovasis design. Due to the steep slope of the property, the rain run-off from the house and driveway presented a major issue, flooding the garden and turning it into a "dangerous, weed-infested bog".

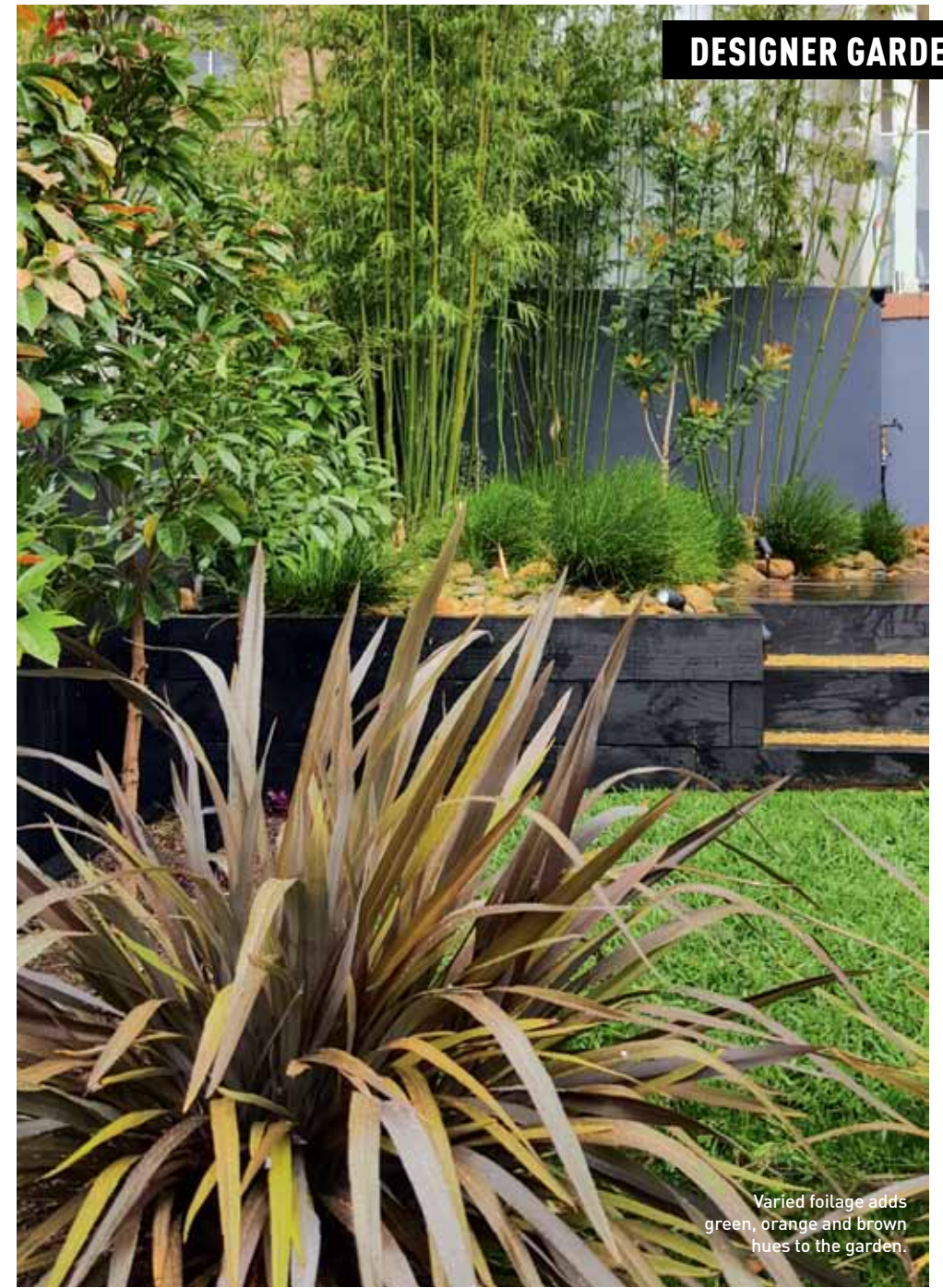
Often nature itself provides the best solution to a problem and here was no exception — with a little help, of course. A rain garden was incorporated to channel stormwater from the guttering of the home into the garden.

The original space featured crumbling retaining walls, a built-in brick barbecue, crumbling fish pond, rotting decks and completely overgrown garden, so the brief was to create a safe, multifunctional garden that the whole family could enjoy. It's crazy to think that prior to the redesign the family had never ventured into the garden as it was too dangerous.



"The brief was to create a safe, multifunctional garden that the whole family could enjoy"

Sufficient screening from the neighbours is provided.



Varied foliage adds green, orange and brown hues to the garden.



ABOVE Kangaroo paws add a pop of colour and subdued screening. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM** A firepit creates an interesting feature and makes the area usable in winter.

To make the space more usable, the team at inovasis teamed up with Terraneo Landscape Design (who constructed the design) to create a series of zones for different uses. The homeowners requested a contemporary garden with multifunctional terracing to address the sloping topography. It was also important that the design used the natural contours of the land where possible to reduce construction costs. Fluid curves were introduced to soften the existing linear elements of the garden and deck.

Of utmost importance was a place to relax, read and entertain, so a curved deck was built for the adults. Circles of deck have been cut out to include *Lagerstroemia* 'Natchez' (white crepe myrtle), deciduous trees that, when mature, will provide shade over the white butterfly chairs and deck. A firepit creates a feature year round and makes the space usable during the cooler months. For convenience, firewood storage is located underneath the steps leading from the home to the deck.

Addressing the fall of the land and providing a safe and cushiony area for the kids to frolic on, two lawn terraces were added, which also pack a bright green punch. On the outskirts, bamboo and other boundary plantings provide privacy from neighbours while maintaining views over Bardwell Valley and the golf course.

For the boundary screening, *Elaeocarpus eumundii* was selected due to its upright habit and succeeds in providing privacy from neighbours on the upper lawn terrace. Growing to 6–7m when mature, this tree provides sufficient screening for the deck as well as dense, lush foliage. Chosen for its relatively low mature height of 3m as well as its cascading form and ability to draw the eye back into the garden, *Syzygium luehmannii* 'Cascade' screens neighbours on the "lower lawn". In addition, *Anigozanthos* 'Big Red' (kangaroo paw) provides subtle screening for those using the deck.

The old, crumbling pond was transformed into a feature garden bed which introduces

more greenery and texture to the space. A row of kangaroo paws helps shield the deck from the neighbouring houses and provides a pop of bright colour. Steps were also added to the deck to improve the flow from the home.

The planting scheme was planned to include natives, screening and structural plants. Of course the rain garden required plants that would cope with intermittent floods of water, including *Tristaniopsis* 'Luscious' and *Ficinia nodosa*. *Phormium tenax* 'Black Wave' was also added to provide structural form and interest. Cascading native plants including *Scaevola* 'Mauve Clusters' and *Myoporum* help to soften the old pond turned garden bed and retaining walls.

The result of this landscaping project is a vibrant, lush space filled with plantings. While not a huge area overall, every space is used to its full potential, providing zones for both adults and kids to relax and play in the safety and privacy of their own backyard.