

Water views

Handmade Maco tiles border the central water feature. The walls are topped with slabs of granite, forming handy bench seating.

Background briefing

The boundary fence is painted charcoal so it visually recedes. *Viburnum odoratissimum* hedge. A Chinese elm, left, is encircled by *Echium fastuosum* and *Artemisia*.

Open invitation

Made from tallowwood treated with natural oil, the slatted pergola roof features 10 x 20mm battens, providing shade while maximising the sense of openness and airiness.

Social climbing

Handmade 'Scarlet O'Hara' roses up the pergola post while on the left the path is flanked by *Strobilanthes sanguinalis*, *Echium fastuosum* and *Pseuderimera yuccoides*.

Strong line-up

Travertine pavers are laid in strips over reinforced concrete, with river pebbles in between. Their placement is strategic, leading guests around the home to the rear garden. "They also help to blur the divide between the paving and lawn," says Matt.

**MATT LEACY****Director & designer,
Landart Landscapes****The brief**

With its stunning beachside location in southern Sydney, this modest 1950s home was marooned in a sea of lawn when Matt came to the rescue. "The owners wanted a garden design that stayed true to the architecture, but with a modern twist," says Matt. "They wanted to create entertaining areas that would allow guests to circulate."

The solution

Matt has transformed the 750m² site into an enticing entertainer's garden. The front and rear gardens now have relaxed seating zones and focal points, all linked by a materials palette of timber and travertine paving as well as a range of attractive and hardy plants.

Designer statement

"The garden is influenced by the architecture and the house is enhanced by this new landscape. We've created something unique and true to the property."

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HOW TO**MAKE A CONNECTION**

A 1950s seaside property has been completed by a garden that salutes its location and makes entertaining a breeze.

STORY ELIZABETH WILSON / PHOTOGRAPHY JASON BUSCH



DRAWING THE LINES

◀ The slatted roof over the front pergola sends slender shadow lines onto the seating area, creating a wonderful graphic pattern. The stone wall is made from limestone cladding, Newport Random Ashlar from Eco Outdoor. The timber is tallwood, an Australian hardwood that will turn silvery-grey over time. Matt has installed uplights to send shafts of light up the rock face at night.

Hardy performers

Strelitzia nicotia (giant bird of paradise), *Alpinia zerumbet* 'Variegata' and succulents such as *Crassula* 'Blue Bird' are key plants in the rear, ocean-facing, garden, chosen for their hardness and ability to handle salty conditions and high winds.

View point

The bespoke back fence, made from tallwood and steel mesh, is designed in a simple style in keeping with the 1950s architecture of the home. Its transparency means it doesn't impede the water views.



Viburnum obovatum

Viburnum odoratissimum is a hedge plant that recurs throughout the garden. "It's a hardy, fast-establishing, reliable plant with beautiful lime-green new growth and white flowers in spring/summer," says Matt.

Walk the line

The lines of travertine paving at the side of the house have a strong visual and gravitational effect, directing guests. "They lead guests down the side of the house to the rear of the property," says Matt. "They connect all the areas."

Barbecue season

The survey and barbecue area at the side of the house is defined by the timber 'splashback' made of 40x20mm tallwood battens. The benchtop is honed concrete.

Coastal route

Here, Matt's expert tips for a successful coastal garden:

- ▶ Coastal soils are usually sandy so invest in a good irrigation system. Condition the soil with organic matter and build up the humus in the soil. A good solid layer of mulch can also help with water retention.
- ▶ Create a windbreak using plants or artificial structures to protect seating areas against coastal winds.
- ▶ A good evergreen hedge used as a windbreak can provide protection to the more sensitive plants.
- ▶ Plant selection is crucial. Choose plants that can withstand salty and windy conditions. Some proven hardy performers that work well together are:
 - *Carpobrotus*
 - *Crassula* 'Blue Bird' and many other succulents
 - *Westringia fruticosa*
 - *Aloe barberae*
 - *Banksia*
 - *Casuarina glauca* 'Cousin it'
 - Ornamental grasses



- 1 / Backyard
- 2 / House
- 3 / Pergola
- 4 / Paving
- 5 / Water feature
- 6 / Paving
- 7 / Chinese elm
- 8 / *Strelitzia nicotia*
- 9 / Barbecue area
- 10 / Deck with awning

A / *Echium fastuosum* and *Agave attenuata*, front garden.
 B / The driveway is very narrow so Matt has selected plants that are slender and tall: he has used pleached ornamental pear trees (*Pyrus nivalis*) to create a raised hedge, underplanted with star jasmine which will grow to hide the fence.
 C / An outdoor shower in the rear garden, made from tallwood with a copper rose.
 D / *Echium fastuosum*, *Strobilanthes gossypinus* and *Crassula* 'Blue Bird' form a pretty tapestry. **H&G**