

BROCKHOFF & SWANN GARDEN

It has been challenging to establish a garden on this site over the last six years. Our charming and extensive borrowed landscape – the main reason we chose the property – contains very large trees with voracious root systems. This has dictated careful plant selection. These trees do, however, afford shelter and shade and within these conditions many plants thrive.

Once the house was built we had several small spaces in which to create a lush green retreat from inner city life. ‘Somewhere to get wet, somewhere to sit, dine and barbecue, somewhere for two Jack Russell terriers, citrus trees (that cannot be grown in Sorrento), herbs and vegetables, compost, year-round beauty and seasonal surprises, and a blurring of the boundaries’. This was the brief to self.

The Arrival Courtyard. As you step through the threshold of the front gate, visitors feel immediately enveloped in green serenity. Korean Rice Paper Plant (*Tetrapanax papyrifera*) create the overhead canopy, Goldstripe Bamboo is included for the vibrant patterning of its stems and screening properties, *Camellia sasanqua* ‘Hiryu’ for childhood memories and autumn pops of hot pink, *Euphorbia lambii* for its architectural form and *Daphne odora* ‘Aureomarginata’ for scent. On the whole, most of the plants are chosen not so much for their blooms but for the texture and colour of their foliage. This is what we see 12 months of the year.

The flowers are a fleeting bonus. It is a serene space, reflective and welcoming.

The Side Gardens are designed to be viewed from within our home and merge with the interior spaces. Windows and doors are the full height of the rooms to enhance this connection, and the carpet colours in two instances are green like grass and the forest floor. The kitchen cabinetry is also green which reflects the outside. Outside has been brought inside. Japanese Maples, Sacred Bamboo (*Nandina domestica*), Elephant Ears (*Alocasia macchoriza*), Cannas, *Monstera deliciosa*, *Pittosporum tobira* ‘Miss Muffet’ and *Pratia pedunculata* form the basis of the plant palette. Mike Nicholl’s Red Gum sculpture of a woman hides under the foliage.

Pool Garden. “Are we going to have a swimming pool when we move?” I was asked by our two young eager swimmers. “Yes ... but not your everyday lap pool” was the response. The concrete tank pool is affordable, sculptural and highly effective as a spot to cool off in.

Laps are possibly achieved by swimming in circles. Citrus trees, a discarded ornamental banana, hot pink Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica* ‘Tuscarora’), bright orange Canna and bright yellow winter-flowering *Acacia podalyriifolia* all provide a riot of colour at different times. Interest is created within the space with foliage and colour, as views of the park landscape were not afforded from this area. Bright colours are repeated in our house with boldly-coloured cushions and beanbags.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website
www.opengardensvictoria.org.au



Landscape materials have also been carefully considered: Pyrenees Quarries (in central Victoria) crazy slate for its colour and organic texture; recycled timber battens from the decommissioned Portland abattoirs give instant patina to fences and screens; exposed aggregate concrete that has been sandblasted for the front patio to incorporate all the different colours; and Cypress Pine front steps for a silver weathered look. Where possible, materials are selected from Victoria to reduce transport miles.

37FBR is a garden for everyday living for a small family, for dogs, for thirsty birdlife, for friends and clients, and for me it is a private oasis from the hustle and bustle of city life. It also provides opportunities to experiment with plants. It is a garden that is easy to maintain where careful plant selection is the key.

Fiona Brockhoff and David Swann