

Small Spaces, Creative Places

Welcome to our two gardens - Brit and Caleb's new garden in Unit 4 and Steven's more established garden in Unit 5. They are small gardens, but creative spaces. Both are filled with creative ideas that make the most of the available spaces that we each have and the lifestyles we each want to live. Both have a mix of recycled, upcycled and new materials with each garden having different planting styles. Our gardens are our playgrounds where we enjoy creating gardens, undertaking various DIY projects and spending time relaxing.

Firstly, you'll experience our communal perennial patch in the front common area. This was our joint 2020 lockdown garden renovation project where we removed the lawn and added flowering seasonal interest. The upright sleepers were salvaged from Caleb and Brit's backyard and positioned to help achieve more privacy for the front entries of Units 3 and 4. The perennial selection primarily provides a Spring and Summer flowering display that includes *Salvia* 'Royal Bumble', *Salvia nemorosa* 'Ostfriesland', *Stachys byzantina*, *Nepeta racemosa* 'Walker's Low', *Limonium perezii*, *Canna indica* 'Wyoming', *Agastache* 'Blue Liquorice', *Kniphofia* 'Shining Sceptre', *Miscanthus* 'Gracillimus', *Panicum virgatum*, *Phlomis russeliana*, lavenders and iris.

UNIT 4, 200 SHERBOURNE RD, MONTMORENCY - Over to you Brit & Caleb

Our small space of 150m² began as a typical suburban backyard. Entering through the side gate onto a gravel path leads to a paved sitting area with a small patch of lawn and a garden bed that fills the majority of the space. When we moved in four and a half years ago, we knew it wasn't the type of space that we would spend a lot of time in, so it created an opportunity for us to get creative with the space.

We both have very different opinions about the types of plants we like and even outdoor spaces we spend time in, but the one thing we do have in common is that we both love spending time outdoors in nature. So we thought...why not create multiple spaces with different varieties of plants and aesthetics so we don't have to 'choose' just one theme?! We definitely set ourselves up for a challenge but the fun part came when we needed to create flow and consistency between the different spaces, especially when working in a small 150m² space. There were many discussions and image searches on how to create this flow, especially when going from a fernery, into a native garden, then flowing into a sunken Japanese inspired fire pit area, to finally a coastal area. We wanted to create spaces where we could sit and enjoy the sounds of nature, each other's company, and hopefully into the future, time with our friends and family.

GARDEN NOTES

We tend to describe our garden as 'our little garden escape'. We wanted a space we could call our own, to experience different areas in different ways, depending on how we were feeling in the moment, and spaces we could use in all seasons, no matter what the weather was. When COVID lockdowns first hit us, we decided to hit the ground running with the work.

It took two days to completely dismantle and pull out every single plant in a garden that was over 10 years old. Now all cleared, we stood back to take it all in, and that's when the scale of the project hit us! The next few months were filled with planning and structural work, including one very large retaining wall. Once the bones of the structure were complete, we continued with the designing and planting... the fun parts! We have used a mixture of upcycled, recycled and new materials throughout the whole garden. With our backgrounds as a graphic designer, horticulturist and carpenter with a passion for furniture design, we had the opportunity to let the creativity flow and run wild. All outdoor furniture and timber features were designed and built by the both of us, either oiled in a natural finish or left to silver off to feel more harmonious with the garden. We knew where we wanted to have seating and the atmosphere we wanted to create whilst spending time in the area.

While planning and researching plant varieties, one of the biggest goals was to bring in as much wildlife as possible. We want to see the native birds and bees, so we set out to create a habitat for us all to enjoy and benefit from.

Although our garden is in its early days, we are excited to see the growth and development over the next few years, but also for others to see that although you might have a small space, it doesn't mean you need to hold back the creativity and just choose one theme. We are excited to see what works, and what doesn't... but most of all we are excited to finally be able to sit back and enjoy what we have created together, because we love it, and we hope you will too!

Follow the development of our little slice of serenity on Instagram with the hashtags #ourcuratedmess and #ourlittlegardenescape

UNIT 5, 200 SHERBOURNE RD, MONTMORENCY - Over to you Steven

I moved into No5 in 2005. A humble unit with an odd-shaped level-changing backyard that was full of weedy trees, vines and groundcovers. Once that was cleared it revealed a good-sized backyard. The entire garden is 250m². I've enjoyed the slow and steady progression of developing my garden as time and motivation permitted. All projects have been undertaken by myself with some cherished help at times from my parents when they visited from interstate. My garden is a collection of spaces woven together with a repeated planting palette. My backyard is sloped which has brought some challenges to landscaping however it has also enabled me to create a garden that I feel is more interesting and fits as much as I can into my available land.

GARDEN NOTES

The Front Entry

My primary aim here was to create privacy for my entry. The corten steel screen panels and gate are made by Melissa Thomas. The second-hand concrete pavers provide a patchwork feel and complement the weathered cypress sleeper boardwalks. The Slender Weaver bamboo and under plantings provide a lush evergreen enclosed space for me to look onto from inside.

The Side Garden

I wanted to maximise the narrow utility side of my unit. The boundary feature wall provides an effective cladding, inclusive of in-built planter boxes that are positioned deliberately for the view from my kitchen and living area (painted in 'Treacle'). The cypress pine boardwalk connects the front garden to the rear. The cement wash troughs bring herbs and flowers to my kitchen window view, the timber bench covers the split system and the recycled doors (painted in 'Bollywood Jade') provide a sitting nook and hides the rubbish bins and hot water system, beyond which lies my outdoor bath.

The Backyard

This is my main garden area and includes my Red Pod wall garden, my outdoor dining area on the upper level and my two sitting areas in the lower level where I enjoy my fire pit. And for fun I've included a 3m slide that runs down the sloped embankment. A fun hard rubbish find! I built my Red Pod wall to enhance privacy in my backyard and to have a secluded spot to lie down overlooking my garden. The pod is cantilevered in the wall to provide a floating effect and the wall is built away from the boundary to provide for a screening hedge of *Pittosporum* 'Screen Master'. The upholstery is weatherproof and is ready to use anytime. The potted Coral Bark Maples (*Acer palmatum* 'Senkaki') provide seasonal interest, the timber screens are planted with *Muehlenbeckia complexa* and the surrounding plantings include *Lomandra* 'Little Con', *Cotyledon* 'Silver Waves', *Nandina domestica*, *Agave attenuata*, *Strelitzia reginae*, Aechmeas and Clivias. The newly renovated dining and BBQ area has had previous configurations from vegetable patch to perennial patch to smaller dining areas, all of which I've thoroughly enjoyed. Its current format is now ideal for larger gatherings with the cypress pine table setting and its surrounds of potted succulents and hopeful canopy of ornamental grape vine. The timber entry in the wall leads into my garden shed / cupboard. The wall style matches the Red Pod wall and boundary fences to achieve continuity of materials throughout the garden and the horizontal lengths help to draw one's eye along and into the garden rather than upwards. The lower garden spaces include weathered timber decks that are enclosed with the Slender Weaver bamboo and Ornamental Pears (*Pyrus calleryana* 'Capital') and are under-planted with Clivias, Bromeliads and Plumbago. The surrounding gardens include robust plantings of *Prunus pissardii*, *Melianthus major*, Aeoniums, *Canna* 'Wyoming', *Plectranthus argentatus*, *Ruscus hypoglossum*, *Asparagus densiflorus* 'Myersii', *Salvia* 'Royal Bumble' and Clivias. Feel free to follow me on Instagram at #stevenwellsthegardener and the #gardenatNo5 hashtag.

These notes can be downloaded from the Open Gardens Victoria website:

www.opengardensvictoria.org.au