

GARDEN NOTES

MAIN RIDGE GARDEN

This Mornington Peninsula holiday home sits elegantly on the shore of a large dam the size of a lake. The owners, Grant Crothers and Amanda Walton and their three daughters, started out in a small cottage at the top of the property (a run-down apple orchard), then later moved into a former packing shed where they built a living pod and stayed for seven years. However the main attraction was always the lake at the bottom of the hill.

Sydney architects Meacham Nockles McQualter came up with the concept 'to site the building close to the earth, so you step immediately out of the house and into the garden'. The house was based on the simple island holiday homes in Scandinavia, and was simply built with ECOply, concrete, recycled timber and corrugated iron.

The climate on the Mornington Peninsula ranges from hot summers to bone-chilling winters, so the house was designed to cope with both. Shade in the summer is provided by external awnings, slatted timber eaves and internal blinds; and in winter, a slow combustion wood heater complements the geothermal in-slab hydronic heating.

However a large part of the attraction and success of this house is the beautiful native garden in which it sits. Designed by renowned landscape firm, Fiona Brockhoff Design, the garden is not only beautiful but is a crucial link with the interior.

In designing the garden, Fiona said: "It was about creating a bush lakeside garden... making it feel like it was on a water course and thinking about the types of plants and the look for the plants that would emulate that scenario."

However, the site was not without its challenges especially for how to deal with the huge amount of underground water and plants that didn't mind being inundated sometimes whilst being in dry clay during the hot summer.

Landscape materials used included Pyrenees Quarries slate, local fine granitic gravel for the paths, and recycled pier timbers for steps and in the gravel to define the entrance. A major feature in the garden are the kangaroo paws *Anigozanthos* 'Big Red' and the climbing Crimson glory vine (*Vitis cignetiae*) rambling over the pergola in the summer time.

Other plants include the small Long-flowered Marlock (*Eucalyptus macrandra*) and Black Sheoak (*Allocasuarina littoralis*), and for deciduous trees with autumn colour Golden Rain Tree (*Koelreuteria paniculata*) were chosen. Mass planting of tussocks such as kangaroo grass (*Themeda triandra* 'True Blue') and groundcovers including *Grevillea lanigera* 'Mt Tamboritha', which flowers through winter. The striking flaxes *Phormium tenax* 'Anna Red' have thrived in the wet conditions along with Showy Honey Myrtle (*Melaleuca nesophila*) and the indigenous tussock grass *Poa labillardieri*.

The eastern side of the house includes a productive garden and chooks which are tended by Amanda.

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