



Lyndall Keating

Horticulturist, garden designer and head of Sydney design company Garden Society shares her creative insights and highlights.

PHOTOGRAPHY *Kristina Soljo*

Produced by Elizabeth Wilson.

“I have always loved the way plants make a picture that forms a garden.”

When I was a child, I was encouraged to play outside, which is where my love of the outdoors developed. I have always loved plants and the way they make a picture that forms a garden. I think I am both creative and practical, so following this career pathway wasn't a difficult transition.

My work days vary a lot, but always start early – often in the dark. After kissing my daughters [Camille, 11, and Sabine, eight] goodbye, my schedule might include client meetings, sourcing plants, product procurement, or time in the office for planning layouts or meeting with my teams. The days can be long, full-on and challenging, but also rewarding when the job is done and the clients are happy.

I'm really passionate about horticulture and landscape design. Watching our gardens grow and seeing homeowners develop a relationship with their gardens is really special. I enjoy the challenge of interpreting the architecture of a building and merging it with the landscape, so there is a connection between the indoors and the external environment.

I'm never quite sure if I have my work-life balance right. But I keep trying! Yoga helps. Let's call it a work in progress.

What's on my reading list? *The Planthunter: Truth, Beauty, Chaos and Plants* by Georgina Reid. It's an exploration of the way people around the world find truth, beauty, purpose and connection through the act of gardening.

The biggest challenge of my career was having the conviction that I could do this for myself. Believing in my own success.

I feel a sense of achievement at the completion of every job. It's a wonderful feeling to visualise and sense a garden, then design and nurture it to its full potential. Achievement in a larger sense isn't a day to day feeling, it's just something that hits you every now and then.

A trip to Japan connected all the dots for me. While I was there, I discovered the country's very modern yet ancient history – the architecture, the gardens, the culture – but it was the philosophical connection to the landscape that I particularly found important. Japanese gardens combine aesthetics with ethics, and beauty with philosophy. Lifestyle and design choices are connected with nature, which in turn benefit health and wellbeing. I wanted to apply this ideal in my work, as well as in my own home.

I find inspiration in all sorts of everyday things. The Australian landscape and its colours. Architecture. Good design. Travel. I am a bit of a minimalist – I much prefer simplicity and clean lines. I'm attracted to rawness in both materials and design. The creatives I most admire can speak the unique language between architecture and landscaped areas.

My all-time favourite piece of furniture would have to be the BKF Butterfly Chair, designed in 1938. It doesn't take itself too seriously, perhaps because of its organic form, and it's so comfortable – I love the way the sitter and chair become one. But from a practical point of view, it has a versatility that allows it to be enjoyed both indoors and out.

Choosing a favourite plant is more difficult – I have so many! It would be unfair to choose just one. My go-to plants are proven performers and often the foundation of a great plant palette. At the moment, *Kalanchoe* 'Silver Spoons', narrow-leaf fig (*Ficus longifolia*), Zanzibar gem and Aloe Big Red are top of the list. *Time is the greatest luxury of all.* Having the option to choose how I spend my time, and with whom. There's no joy like presence in the moment. **H&G**

Garden Society; gardensociety.com.au.



LYNDALL'S FAVOURITE THINGS

From top *The Planthunter: Truth, Beauty, Chaos and Plants* book by Georgina Reid. **Zanzibar gem** (*Zamioculcas zamiifolia*). BKF **Butterfly Chair**. **Arashiyama Bamboo Grove** in Kyoto, Japan. **OPPOSITE** Lyndall and a garden she designed in Sydney's east.