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Standing proud

Lyndall loves the sculptural shape of these rush-leaf bird of paradise plants (*Strelitzia juncea*) against the white wall of the home. At the base of the vine is *Aloe barbadensis* and *Carex comans* 'Frosted Curls'.

Exotic accent

One of the original plants in the garden, this *Bougainvillea* 'Scarlett O'Hara' needed maintenance. "We pruned it and restored its vigour. The pink is a wonderful accent colour in among the lush green."

Lush carpet

The homeowners wanted Japanese clumping grass (*Zoysia tenuifolia*) to feature in the garden. Lyndall used it as a groundcover, embedding the stepping stones within. "The *Zoysia* grows in full-to-medium sun. It sends out runners and grows in soft, wave-like clumps," says Lyndall. It also features in the white planter on the steps.

Texture & colour

This bed of "textured greens with silver highlights" includes silver teaspoons (*Kalanchoe bracteata*), *Rhaphiolepis* 'Oriental Pearl', lime-green money plant (*Crassula ovata*), blue chalksticks (*Senecio serpens*) and coastal rosemary (*Westringia fruticosa*).

Changing conditions

One side of the garden is shady, the other is in full sun. "It was a challenge to create symmetry of plant colour, texture and tone," says Lyndall. Two plants that occur on both sides are *Crassula ovata* and *Senecio serpens*. The lawn is Sir Walter buffalo, a hardy evergreen grass.

How to WORK A ROUND

This Sydney garden has been elevated in more ways than one, with a mix of circular lawn, modern coastal planting and a wonderful palette of silver and green.

STORY Elizabeth Wilson | PHOTOGRAPHY Simon Whitbread



LYNDALL KEATING

**Co-founder,
Garden Society**

The project

Hilly terrain can pose challenges to garden-making, but it can also be the catalyst for a truly dynamic design. Pre-renovation, this front garden in Sydney's undulating eastern suburbs consisted of a few trees dotted around a steeply sloping lawn dropping one storey down to the street level. The homeowners' brief to Lyndall was for a garden that would help to soften the strong geometry of the home's architecture and existing hard surfaces, including two timber decks. Above all, they were seeking to create a private, lush garden with a central area of lawn.

The solution

Tonnes of soil were brought in to raise the level of the lawn, which Lyndall designed as a circle roughly 10m in diameter. This resulted in a garden of lovely curves, the perfect counterpoint to the strong lines of the house. The plant mix is all about textured greens with silvery highlights, creating a lush and layered effect. A curved path of light-coloured stepping stones embedded in Japanese clumping grass (*Zoysia tenuifolia*) serves to connect and visually soften the two timber decks.

Designer statement

"This is a modern, coastal garden. I love its layers and multiple dimensions. It is wonderful to walk through and beautiful viewed from above." ▶



SOFT TOUCHES

Entry to the garden is now a journey through different layers of green. “We used lower-level plantings around the stairs and more architectural plants as you reach the upper lawn level,” says Lyndall. The garden bed at the top of the retaining wall is filled with blue chalksticks (*Senecio serpens*), a hardy, drought-tolerant succulent with silver-blue foliage. Flowing over the wall is *Dichondra* ‘Silver Falls’. A cardboard palm (*Zamia furfuracea*) can be seen on the left.

Olive branch

Three mature olive trees and the greyed-off timber boardwalk were all part of the original garden. Lyndall drew on those elements by including silvery-grey tones in the new plantings.

Cute cluster

A group of pots creates a focal point at the corner of the lower deck. A frangipani in an oversized pot lends height while an eye-catching foxtail fern (*Asparagus densiflorus* ‘Myersii’) fills the lowest pot.



Side lines

The lawn is ringed with 75mm-high Corten steel edging, which helps to define the lawn and separate it from the *Zoysia* grass and garden, which is planted as a 1.5m-wide ribbon of dense, low-level foliage.

Stepping out

The stepping stones are ‘Endicott’ split stone from Eco Outdoor. They were individually hand-cut and the spacing between them was designed to suit the homeowner’s stride.

Big screen

A thick hedge of *Viburnum odoratissimum* screens the garden from the street, ensuring complete privacy. The viburnum tolerates full sun, copes with coastal winds and even reduces the noise from the street.

The success of any garden lies in the gardener’s ability to work with the inherent strengths and idiosyncrasies of the site. Lyndall sheds light on her approach:

- ✦ Choose plants that will thrive in their locations, bearing in mind that conditions can vary within a garden. In this case, one side of the garden is shady while the other enjoys full sun.
- ✦ Accentuate key design elements with plants. Here, we selected round-leaved *Carissa grandiflora* ‘Desert Star’ and *Crassula ovata* because they echo the circular lawn. Other plants are clipped into ball shapes for the same reason.
- ✦ Work with the existing elements. We played up the silvery-grey tones of the timber deck in the plant palette – lots of greens with silver-foliage highlights.



A Stepping stones among the Japanese clumping grass (*Zoysia tenuifolia*). **B** A variously sized group of pots containing (from left) century plant (*Agave geminiflora*), foxtail fern (*Asparagus densiflorus* ‘Myersii’) and a yellow frangipani (*Plumeria acutifolia*) underplanted with *Dichondra* ‘Silver Falls’. **C** The perfect perch from which to view the circular garden. **D** Magnificent *Bougainvillea* ‘Scarlett O’Hara’ in all its dark-pink glory. **LEFT** An aerial view of the garden showing the circle of lawn and textural planting. The beautiful crown of a kentia palm (*Howea forsteriana*) can be seen on the top edge of the circular lawn. H&G

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