



BREATH OF FRESH AIR

The back garden was “a complete dump” and the owners hardly stepped out, but after two years of neglect they called in outdoor development specialists Living Environs to put matters right

AFTER two years of keeping the back door closed and only stepping outside when absolutely necessary, a Wembley family decided it was time to call in the professionals. Although they’d completely renovated the interior of their 1940s home, they’d run out of steam when it came to the back garden.

“We’d never been able to entertain outside because of the state of the garden, which had a sloping surface and degraded structures and plants,” the owner says.

“When it came to the backyard, we just didn’t have the time or energy left so we asked Living Environs to manage the entire process.”

Although Living Environs director Sam Keats remembers the original garden as “a complete dump”, he was still up for the challenge of transforming it into a family-friendly space.

“There was an old asbestos shed out there, an old retaining wall that was overgrown with plants and some old fencing for no real reason. The owners had to get through all that to get to an old Hills hoist at the back of the garden,” he says. “It basically hadn’t been touched or looked after for years and years and was completely unusable.”

The owners’ design brief was simply about creating an inviting, usable, low-maintenance back garden.

“They wanted a pool, they wanted a shed and they wanted a storage area. They wanted a place where they could entertain friends and an area where the kids could play,” Sam says.

Importantly, they also wanted a bright space with plenty of personality, which linked seamlessly with the home.

To help the owners visualise the new garden, Sam prepared a 3D model.

“The owners were struggling to visualise exactly what it was going to look like and the 3D model really helped,” he says.

“It was great to be able to see where the shadows of the sun would hit the garden at any time of the year.”

The completed, new-look outdoor area ticks all the boxes on the owners’ must-have list.

It features a large, undercover alfresco dining space with timber decking under a high-raising skillion roof that links the outdoor space to the internal family room.

Leading on from the alfresco area, and separated by clear glass fencing, is a swimming pool surrounded by terraced lawns, gardens and a utility service area.

“Tonnes of soil were removed immediately from the site to allow for a large terrace at the same level as the alfresco,” Sam says.

Metal fencing runs along the lawn side of the pool and there are colourful panels of horizontal, painted pine at the far end – perfectly concealing the service area that contains the pool equipment, clothes line and garden shed.

Limestone retaining walls surround a grassed area that’s ideal for the children.

To fulfil the owners’ desire for colour and personality, Sam planted up the retained garden beds with yuccas, star jasmine, cottonwood, hibiscus, dianella breeze and giant liriop.

After two years of being housebound, the owners can finally enjoy their wonderful outdoor space.

“The clients absolutely love it. We’ve transformed a completely useless space with lots of potential into something that’s very functional,” Sam says. “It’s also added value to their home and to their lifestyle.”

Lisa Shearon

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The Wembley garden renovated by Living Environs.

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