



ALL FOR ONE

EVERY VERDANT CORNER OF THIS TRANQUIL BACKYARD HAS BEEN BROUGHT INTO PLAY

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PHOTOGRAPHY CHRIS WARNES

Apartment living in Sydney's beachside suburbs doesn't usually come complete with a private and lush backyard oasis, not to mention a garden that incorporates everything from an infinity pool and heated spa to a stylish outdoor kitchen, alfresco area and even a cubbyhouse with its own picket fence and letterbox.

But that's exactly why Jasmin, Will and their three-year-old son, Elliott, relish spending almost every day in their city sanctuary. "It's such a relaxing and comfortable garden that's very secluded," says Jasmin.

When Jasmin and Will moved into their three-bedroom apartment, the private backyard was more wasteland than wondrous retreat. "It wasn't a useable space," recalls Jasmin. "While it was a pretty sizeable plot of land, it was on a steep slope and was also very under-developed."

Enlisting the expertise of Oliver Sizeland, director of Sydney landscape design and maintenance company Growing Rooms, the couple presented their wishlist and the overhaul of this rare apartment garden began. "It was a massive transformation and not without its challenges," admits Oliver. "We excavated 120 cubic metres of soil. The tiered levels of the backyard required a careful design solution that was not only sympathetic to the steep nature of the space, but would offer efficient and easy-to-maintain areas for family life."

Today, clever plantings of low-maintenance lemon trees and shrubs frame the perimeter of the swim zone, with swaying palm trees dotted throughout to enhance the tropical-resort ambience. Oliver selected creamy-hued limestone pavers - a nod to the home's close proximity to the sea - to surround the pool and ground the steps and sun lounge zone. "Limestone is a beautiful natural stone that ages naturally, whereas some man-made products can sometimes look tired rather quickly," he says.

On one side of the garden, towering bamboo provides a privacy screen, while a vertical garden conceals a large shed in another corner. Best of all, with the shimmering new pool, pergola-covered sun lounge area, timber-decked entertaining space and an expanse of lawn, every pocket of this backyard has been put to good use.

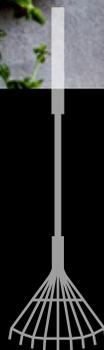
All that's left to do is sit back and watch it grow. "We look forward to seeing the jasmine blossom, palm trees and bamboo develop," says Jasmin. "We get so much enjoyment from being here."

DECK Grounded by the timeless beauty of spotted gum timber decking, the designated cooking and eating area on the lower level of this family garden has already played host to many relaxed occasions. "It's been so lovely to invite over friends with their children to enjoy the space," says homeowner Jasmin. A 'Tidal' powder-coated steel outdoor table and chairs from Tait creates a stylish and functional focal point.



great idea

A built-in bench seat provides extra seating. "They're also a great space-saving feature in any garden, as you can pull another table close and they fit into a corner. This seat has an LED light strip underneath," says designer Oliver.





SUN LOUNGING It's easy to imagine whiling away the day in these Manutti 'Liner' sun lounges from Cosh Living (left), positioned under a newly installed hardwood pergola that will soon be covered in fragrant-flowering jasmine. "It has a really beautiful citrus perfume," says landscape designer Oliver Sizeland. "We've run wire across the pergola to encourage the Madagascar jasmine to create a roof-like effect, for added shade and privacy." >



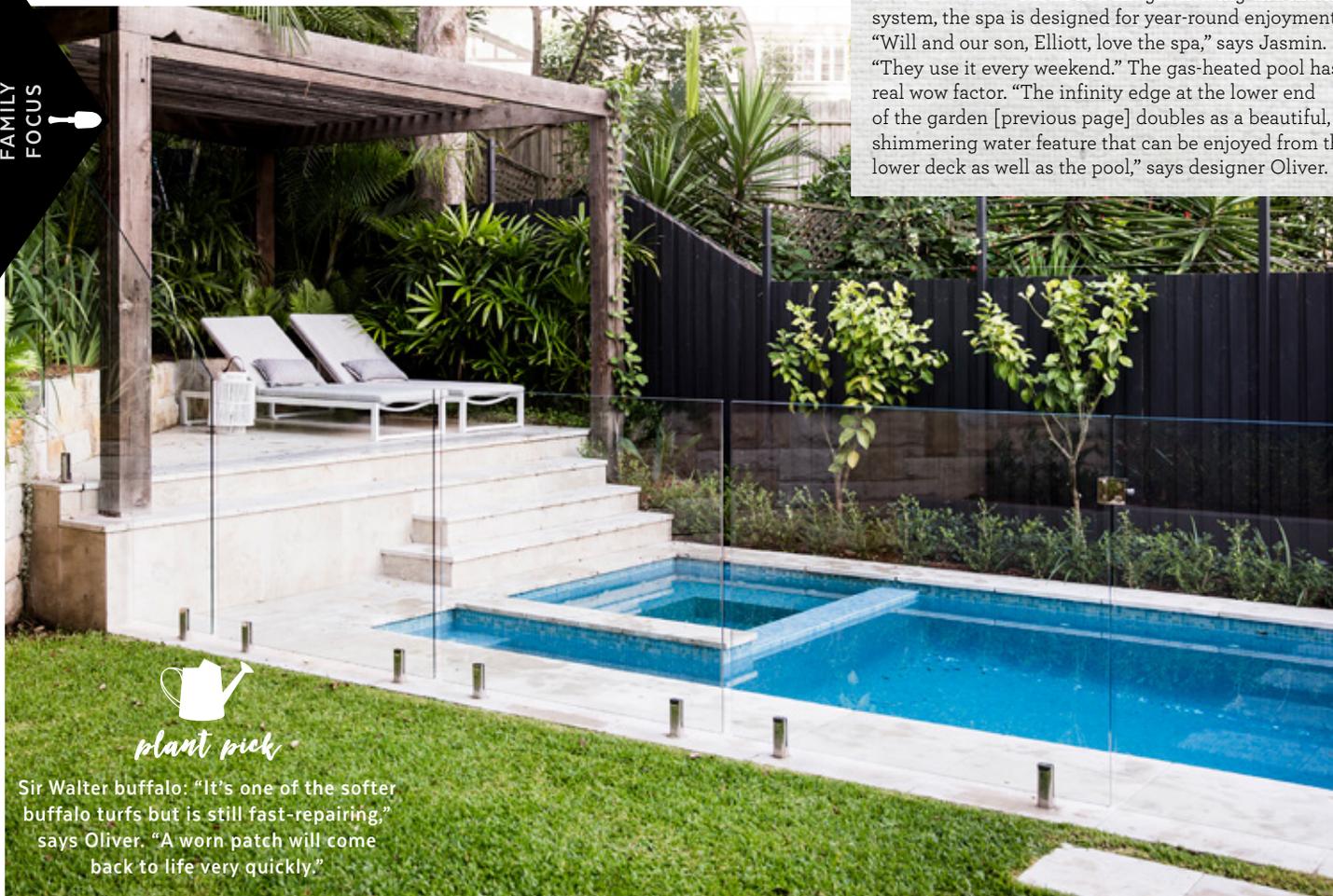
plant pick

Lemon trees: Under-planted with buxus hedge and liriope, "these lemon trees are evergreen and won't drop many leaves into the pool," says Oliver.

great idea

Oliver selected spotted gum coated in clear decking oil for two reasons. "It's a sustainable timber grown in Australia," he says. "Also, I love that it has a beautiful variation of shades. You can get everything, from red through to blonde tones and even a few greys."





plant pick

Sir Walter buffalo: "It's one of the softer buffalo turfs but is still fast-repairing," says Oliver. "A worn patch will come back to life very quickly."

POOL & SPA With an in-built gas heating and filtering system, the spa is designed for year-round enjoyment. "Will and our son, Elliott, love the spa," says Jasmin. "They use it every weekend." The gas-heated pool has real wow factor. "The infinity edge at the lower end of the garden [previous page] doubles as a beautiful, shimmering water feature that can be enjoyed from the lower deck as well as the pool," says designer Oliver.

"THIS GARDEN HAS SO MUCH *purpose and function*, WHICH IS REALLY NICE" ~ JASMIN, HOMEOWNER

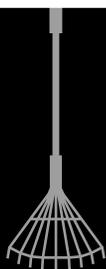


ALFRESCO KITCHEN The spotted gum and black granite enclosed Weber barbecue is very much husband Will's domain. "He has a Greek background and has cooked a lot of lamb spits on it for guests," explains Jasmin. "He loves entertaining!" Wine and beer fridges beneath the barbecue ensure a cold drink is always on hand, and an under-counter laundry is also included.



great idea

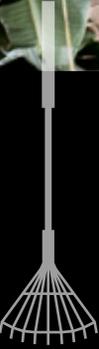
Indulgent yet oh-so-practical, outdoor showers are becoming increasingly popular features, especially for homes near the beach. "This copper shower with a spotted gum screen is one step above the usual, as it provides both hot and cold water," says Oliver.





great idea

Jasmin and Will thought of putting a vegetable patch in this spot (below) - then he found a kit supplier called Cubby Central. "Elliott loves it and invites everyone who comes to the house over for tea parties," says Jasmin. "He's so excited that it's his own little space." *Stockists, page 212*



plant pick

Vertical garden: Installing a lush garden with cascading sword ferns, purple hearts, philodendrons and grassy liriopie in recycled hardwood planters was an ingenious way to conceal the shed. "We wanted some kind of green screen but this was almost an afterthought," reveals Oliver. "Storage sheds can be ugly, so we try and hide them."

great idea

Low-maintenance tropical plants are a sure-fire winner. "You want them to grow and merge so there aren't any set lines," explains Oliver. "You almost allow them to do their own thing, which keeps the maintenance down, and that's a good thing with our busy lives."

