

BEFORE & AFTER



# Punching above its weight

**A small courtyard delivers maximum living thanks to a thoughtful design that capitalises on its strengths, writes Robyn Willis**

**A** good designer makes the best of what they have to work with but it was certainly a mixed bag on this Surry Hills courtyard project.

Director of Growing Rooms Landscapes Oliver Sizeland says the unloved little space was just 8m x 8m and hemmed in by 5m-high walls on all three sides.

With no access to the courtyard, except through the living room, matters were

further complicated when Oliver realised the house had just been renovated.

“Ideally, we’d like people to contact us earlier in the process,” he says. “When you’re talking about big gardens, people are generally pretty good but with the smaller ones, they tend to forget about landscaping.”

The existing outdoor space did not have much to recommend it, with the exception of one important feature.

“That sandstone wall was the

side of an old warehouse which had been redeveloped to become residences,” Oliver says.

“It had heaps of character and I could see that it would light up really well at night. Three plain walls would have made it feel more like a prison yard.”

Everything came out of the courtyard space, including the old pavers, to give them a clean canvas to work with.

Oliver opted to divide the space into two subtly different zones by using stone paving on one side

and a concrete slab on the other.

“The stone gives you space for a lounge area and the table sits better on the flat surface of the concrete slab,” he says. “If you put it on the stone, it would rock.”

Running the concrete pump through the living room and out to the courtyard was stressful.

“We’ve been through people’s houses a few times now but there’s always a risk the pump will split,” he says.

Fortunately, the concrete was poured without incident and once





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the paving was laid, the landscapers installed a built-in lounge with storage underneath and clad it all in spotted gum.

The walls were painted in Aniseed from Porter’s Paints’ stone paint range with some selective planting completing what has become an extended outdoor living space.

“The plant choices were tricky,” Oliver says. “The weather goes from the middle of the day when the sun is right above and it’s really hot and then the next day, there’s no sun.”

He opted for a Japanese maple tree to visually reduce the height of the walls, with Boston ivy behind it. Both will change colour with the seasons. To complete the transition from indoors to outdoors, they installed steel framed bi-fold doors.

**Pictures: Chris Warnes**  
**Styling: Stephanie Powell**  
**More: [growingrooms.com.au](http://growingrooms.com.au)**



New bi-fold doors effectively double the available living space.

