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Clever design and thoughtfully selected materials have seen this Sydney garden grow into its potential — and then some

perfect





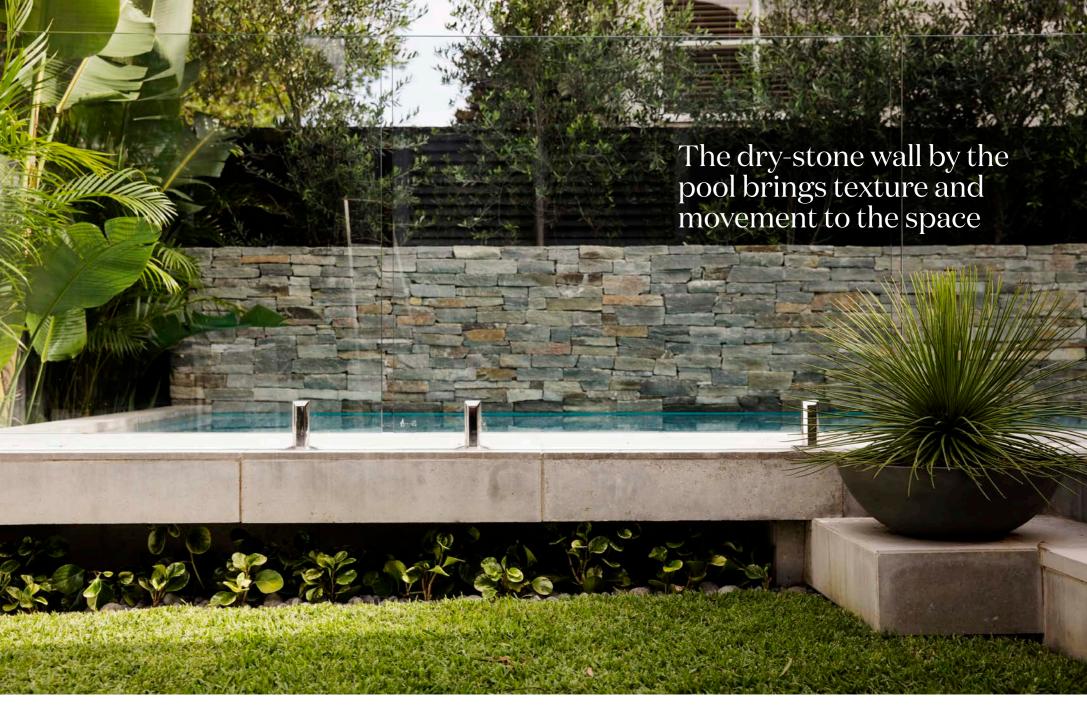
Rooms, the landscape-design firm that was engaged by the

homeowners to give it personality and greater functionality.

As they had used Growing Rooms to maintain the garden of their previous home, the owners knew that Oliver and his team would be able to deliver exactly what they were after, namely a welcoming front garden and an elegant alfresco area with a swimming pool out the back.

To help create a sense of arrival at the front of the house, Oliver opted for a hedge of Murraya paniculata, an evergreen with scented white flowers that offers a nod to the cottagegarden aesthetic. "The hedge still has some growing to do, but it already provides a bit of an acoustic barrier from the street," he explains. It's underplanted with a mix of plants, including rosemary and buxus, all of which were chosen for the interest their foliage creates and their ability to complement the garden's lovely silver-toned olive trees.

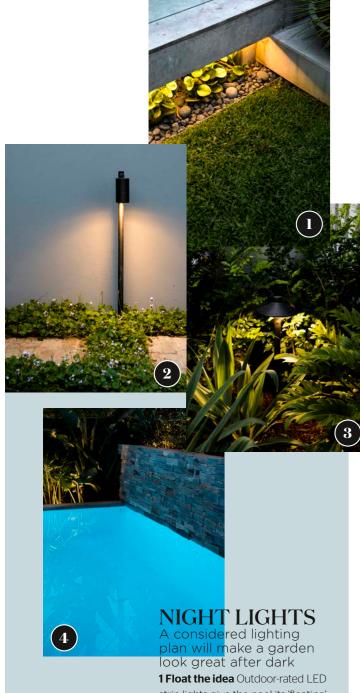
Bluestone crazy pavers have been laid in this section of the garden. "They work perfectly with the irregular shape of the front yard," says Oliver. "Crazy pavers are a good design solution



ABOVE LEFT Textural Baw Baw dry stone walling from Eco Outdoor surrounds the pool, which has been lined with Ezarri 'Niebla' glass mosaics. A hedge of Ficus hillii stands in front of the fence. **ABOVE RIGHT** At the steps, a sculptural Agave stricta has been planted in a shallow pot from Garden Life. The lawn is Sir Walter Buffalo and the tropical plants at the end of the pool include areca palm (Dypsis lutescens) and giant white bird of paradise (Strelitzia nicolai).

PLANT LIFE A broad variety of species ensures foliage is the focus in this garden





1 Float the idea Outdoor-rated LED strip lights give the pool its 'floating' look at night and highlight the plants and pebbles beneath.

2 On high "Path lights play an important role in safely illuminating walkways," says Oliver. "Where lower plants are used, traditional uplights won't work. You need to light them from above."

3 Shining right "If you want to highlight certain plants, look to lighting that's between 220 and 260 lumens," adds Oliver.

4 Fixed on foliage LED spike lights are set around the pool to cast light up into the clusters of tropical plants that surround it.

when things are not necessarily square or rectilinear." Native violet (*Viola banksii*) works beautifully as a groundcover to soften the harder lines of the nearby fence.

From the front, a side passage lined with lush potted cordylines leads through to the backyard. "Our brief was to design an outdoor entertaining area that flowed from the house, to create a sense of seclusion, and to put in a pool – with all the materials kept to a simple, natural palette that complemented the home," says Oliver.

Miramar mid-grey limestone pavers from Eco Outdoor provide the foundation for the alfresco area and extend out to the pool's edge. They're teamed with spotted gum, which is used for the open structure's support beams plus the pool deck and seat. "The spotted gum is treated with Cutek CD50 wood oil," Oliver points out, "to preserve the timber while allowing it to grey off naturally."

The pool is tiled with Ezarri glass mosaics that were chosen to give it an appealingly clear, aqua appearance. "It's been designed so that when you walk out of the back of the house, everything is at the same level; there are no steps. We wanted the pool to 'hover' and sit a little more lightly in the landscape."

A rustic dry-stone wall by the pool brings texture and movement to the space and is the perfect complement to the silver foliage of the olives planted by the pool. "We picked a variety that fruits minimally so the owners aren't forever fishing olives out of the water," says Oliver. Behind the pool seating, a row of *Ficus hillii* 'Flash' forms a neat, dense screen, and at the opposite end of the pool, strappy tropical plants – picked for their fast growth – will soon block out the view of nearby houses.

The alfresco area is now very well set up for year-round enjoyment, adds Oliver. "To maximise its usability it has a fixed roof complete with a fan, heating and lighting. The custombuilt joinery includes a drinks fridge and integrated barbecue, topped with a surface that matches the benchtop in the adjoining kitchen. It has everything you need for a good evening."

And as the sun goes down, the owners can take advantage of an aspect of the garden that Oliver meticulously planned: the lighting. "I really feel that light is so important to a garden," he says. "It's all very well having the area where you're sitting lit up, but ideally you want to see the whole garden, not just be looking out to a stretch of darkness. By using the right amount of light, not too soft and not too overpowering, we have created a nice ambient glow that shows the garden at its best no matter what the hour."

Growing Rooms is based in Double Bay, NSW: growingrooms.com.au



