

EVENT

If you're down Geelong way this weekend and you have a thing for salvias, you may well enjoy the Hot Salvias for Winter Gardens walk at Geelong Botanic Gardens at 2pm tomorrow. A gold coin gift will give you a spot on the walk that will show off the garden's wonderful

collection of salvias that continue to flaunt their vibrant colours through autumn to winter. On Monday Andrew Govanstone will speak about his new book about rose breeder Alister Clark. GBG meeting room at 10.30am.

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Magical mystery tour

JENNIFER Thom's peaceful Peninsula garden has been done by the book.

School teacher Jennifer kept an extensive journal of ideas, notes and cuttings outlining her dream for her drab Mornington garden.

"I wrote down a vision of what I wanted from the garden," she says.

"It didn't include specifics at first, it was just themes."

Her themes included a desire for the garden not to look new or out of place, and she wanted a touch of mystery.

"I didn't want to walk into the garden and be hit by it all in one go," she says.

"The idea was to have mysterious, hidden spaces linked together."

She also liked the notion of using curves, local materials and warm colours. She wanted it to have the sound of flowing water and the aroma of herbs.

It had to be intimate but also great for entertaining, and it needed a "wow factor".

Garden designer and builder Philip Dyer, from Garden Living Space, brought the vision to life, turning a garden of patchy grass and old log edges into a tranquil oasis.

A teppanyaki barbecue is at the heart of the new garden. The barbecue is topped with a large piece of slate Jennifer found at a Castlemaine quarry.

"So often you see the situation where people have barbecues stuck up against the wall of the house, so there's this chasm between the tongue master on the barbecue looking at the wall of the

house and everyone else in the place," Philip says.

"With the teppanyaki-style barbecue you're all there together, you sit up there and it promotes conversation."

Stacked slate from the same quarry is used in the water feature, which provides the background sound Jennifer hoped for and fills the area with a relaxing ambience.

It is also one of the hidden surprises Jennifer hoped for.

"The water feature, which is probably the biggest, most outstanding feature in the garden, is actually hidden from view as you're approaching," Philip says.

"When the plants grow in behind it, it will be completely screened from the outside and it won't be until you enter the garden and turn around that you discover this."

The garden bed next to the water feature transitions from ornamental plants with silvery foliage to a row of tall grasses which add an element of movement in the sea breeze to a herb garden, conveniently close to the barbecue so they can be used in cooking.

Three young apple trees are espaliered on steel lattice against a boundary wall on the other side of this garden bed.

Philip says the basic elements of stone, wood and steel are repeated throughout the five-month-old garden.

"They're very solid, heavy, honest materials. I like the way it came out because there's a great strength to all of the materials within it," he says.

Despite these hard features, the garden is tranquil, which Philip says is achieved by spacing the materials.

"It's like body space between people in crowds, everyone has to find a comfortable distance and you can feel when things are too close and claustrophobic," he says.

Jennifer says the garden also reflects her love of the outdoors and adapts to the changing moods of the activities within it.

She says she most loves that the garden has added another usable space to her home.

"If we'd used the money to make a new kitchen, there'd just be another kitchen there, but this has added an outdoor room," she says.

She says she also enjoys not having to mow and there will be little need to water once the plants are established.

A carefully drafted dream becomes a reality at Mornington



1 Barbecue
Jennifer found the piece of slate for the top of the barbecue at Pyrenees Quarries in Castlemaine. It has deliberately been left rough around the edges to reflect its source.

Flecks of fool's gold throughout the stone are another link with its origins. Wooden beams with steel panels not only support the heavy slab from below, but also provide visual balance. The stainless steel teppanyaki plate contrasts the rawness of the slate. Jennifer picked up the stools on the same jaunt to Castlemaine. They were made by an artist from nearby Guildford.

2 Wooden columns
Reclaimed railway sleepers have been used to create an entry to the garden. "The wooden columns are not actually a fence, they're not keeping anything in or out, but they just provide a visual lead as you come in," Philip says.

"We wanted to have something that really focused you as you entered the property and was leading you step by step from the entrance, through the garden and towards the

house." The columns have been skip dressed, which means some of the surface wood has been planed away to reveal fresh wood below.

3 Herb garden
A mix of European and Asian herbs is planted here, including basil, oregano, thyme, lemon grass, parsley and rosemary. This little section of garden sits between the barbecue and the house, for easy access to the herbs for cooking.

4 WATERFALL

The water feature provides soothing background sound in the garden. The flow can be increased to be heard over a noisy crowd or reduced for more intimate gatherings. The water falls into a small reservoir in which you can dip your feet on a hot day. The stacked stone is slate from the same Castlemaine quarry where Jennifer found the barbecue slab. The water feature is lit softly at night. Dichendra 'Silver falls' has been planted behind and when grown will provide a green cascading effect to complement the flow of water.



5 Miscanthus sinensis
This grass will grow up to about 2m high. The row of low-maintenance miscanthus, with their tasselled heads, will form a beautiful wave-like motion in the breeze. Flowers appear on stalks in summer, opening into often vibrant coloured plumes in autumn. They are ideal plants for borders and waterside plantings. In this case, they also soften the transition from striking ornamental plants to herbs in the garden bed.

6 English lavender
Tufts of English lavender, or *Lavandula angustifolia*, have been used to reflect the structure of the miscanthus behind. The lavender will grow into balls, with flowers growing up on spikes similar to the miscanthus. They will also give off a lovely fragrance, particularly when in flower. Philip says despite being of English origin, the lavender does well in Australian conditions and requires little water.

7 Woolly thyme
The ornamental herb *Thymus pseudolanuginosus* develops a soft woolly appearance as it grows. It spreads well to make a great ground cover and likes full sun to part shade. It will make a soft border between the garden bed and the hard surface of the pedestrian area.

8 Coastal rosemary
Hardy *Westringia fruticosa* shrubs have been planted to create an attractive soft backdrop to the water feature. They also blend with the tone of other plants used in this section. Coastal rosemary is a good screening plant, which will grow up to 2m tall and 2m wide. It can also be clipped to form a small to



medium hedge. It bears small white flowers for most of the year and is happy in full sun or part shade.

9 Granitic sand courtyard
This granitic sand, or crushed granite, ground cover came from a quarry in nearby Dromana. "It naturally has the local colours and you can see how the colouring works really well with the beachside sandy feel," Philip says. The material is compacted to form a very stable and easily maintained surface.

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Vasil's
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