

GARDENS



A 14.5m lap pool is the centrepiece of a stunning garden enjoyed by the McWha family, including Susy and pet Toby (below right).

PICTURES
MANUELA CIFRA



LAP UP THE OUTDOORS

WORKING A POOL INTO THE PLANS WAS A PRIORITY FOR THE OWNERS OF THIS STYLISHLY LANDSCAPED ESSENDON YARD, WRITES **CHERYL CRITCHLEY**



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ULTRA modern and ultra sleek, this contemporary garden is also ultra practical. Its luxurious 14.5m lap pool is perfect for staying cool and fit, while surrounding greenery keeps owners Susy and Craig McWha relaxed. The artificial turf also entices their boys — Adam, 14, and Nicholas, 10, — away from electronic games to play basketball and footy.

Even their dog, bichon frise-shih tzu cross Toby loves it, except when he jumped on the pool cover and his legs almost gave way.

The McWhas' Essendon backyard has all the hallmarks of a show garden, but it is also highly functional. Designed by landscape architect Dan Gayfer of Out from the Blue and built by Daniel Tyrrell of Daniel Tyrrell Landscapes, it ticks all the boxes for an active young family with a sense of style.

The centrepiece is the sleek 14.5m lap pool with spa, which is near the house. There's a handy side-entrance shower so the boys don't have to run inside dripping wet.

Tyrrell says Gayfer did a great job creating something unique but functional. The award-winning Tyrrell usually designs his own gardens, but enjoys teaming with Out from the Blue, which is known for its edgy designs and has won many awards.

"They're pretty much the only people we do construction for," he says.

It is hard to believe that this stunning

garden used to be a plain, sloping backyard. It now features magnolias, blueberry ash, lilly pillies, arthropodium, jasmine and ajuga ground cover, mother-in-laws tongue, convolvulus, and several liriop and dianella grasses.

The mother-in-laws tongue, an upright succulent herb, looks striking against the back of the house with its long, fleshy green and yellow-tinged leaves. Around the corner a cluster of convolvulus provides a lovely contrast with its splash of white flowers.

Several other featured plants, such as the magnolia and ornamental pear, also produce white flowers and blossoms.

One of the few deciduous choices, ornamental pear trees, line a high fence that divides the garden from Craig's garage and water-tank storage area. Everything has a purpose, and the whole garden complements a modern alfresco area the McWhas added to their beautiful 1950s clinker-brick home.

The large, sheltered area is perfect for entertaining. Susy says she wanted the garden to be low maintenance and have a pool as she loves swimming.

"We're thrilled to bits with it," she says. "We use the spa all year round." The whole thing is lit at night by discreet lights, making it perfect for entertaining and enjoying balmy summer evenings. It just looks a picture, Susy says.

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A SPLASH OF INGENUITY

A lap pool is the perfect compromise for those with small to medium gardens who love to swim. It offers a decent workout with plenty of length, but is narrow enough to share limited space with lawn and other garden features. In this case the pool runs along the fence alongside two decent-sized flat sections of artificial turf fashioned from what used to be a sloping lawn. With the spa, the solar-heated pool is 16.5m long and 2.5m wide. The spa is used year-round and connected to a shower accessed from the side of the house. "We just run straight into the shower," says Susy McWha. The pool and spa are lined with charcoal tiles to blend into the garden, and the hardwood decking copes well with plenty of splashing. A cover is cleverly hidden underneath the giant day bed.

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