



WINNER
Medium garden

Owners Caecilia Potter and James Van Smeerdijk
Where Hawthorn, Melbourne
Garden size 890m²
Garden age Three years

This sunken area, in the shade of the peppercorn tree, is a favourite lounging spot. Organic shapes of potted *Agave attenuata* and grass trees present a strong contrast to a formal hedge of Hill's fig (*Ficus hillii*).

'Caecilia's designer's eye and love of gardening are evident everywhere in this lovely family garden.' Helen

Designed by Caecilia, the handcrafted, safety-compliant fence merges with native reeds that help to filter pool water. **ABOVE RIGHT** Owners Caecilia and James with Cicero, their Bengal cat.

The naturally filtered pool has a 20m leg for swimming lengths and a square area 3.5m deep, where Caecilia's sons can play. "A natural pool looks far nicer and feels like a fresh bath," says Caecilia. "There's no yucky chemical smell."

Melbourne's east has its share of lovely houses and gardens, none more so than our Medium Garden category winners, Caecilia Potter and her husband, James. Having renovated the grand 1890s house, Caecilia started designing the garden in 2010, but it was another year before plantings went in.

"I wanted to have a happy, family space where we could eat outside, relax and have friends around. I love cooking and growing my own vegetables so I try to tuck edible things in wherever I can," says Caecilia. "I also wanted it to be pretty, with bursts of colour, lots of scented flowers and foliage I can cut for the house and my office."

The biggest challenge was working a lap pool into the design while still preserving an old, much-loved peppercorn tree and a Chinese weeping elm that shades the kitchen.

Sustainability was also a key driver of the design. In the pool, water is cleaned by means of rock filtration and indigenous water plants rather than chemicals. The thermal mass of surrounding rocks helps keep the pool warm, so minimal heating is required in the cooler months. The reed beds also provide a habitat for native frogs, lizards, insects and birds. ➤

Laps of luxury

Surrounding a fairytale heritage mansion, this Melbourne layout balances visual splendour and family fun.

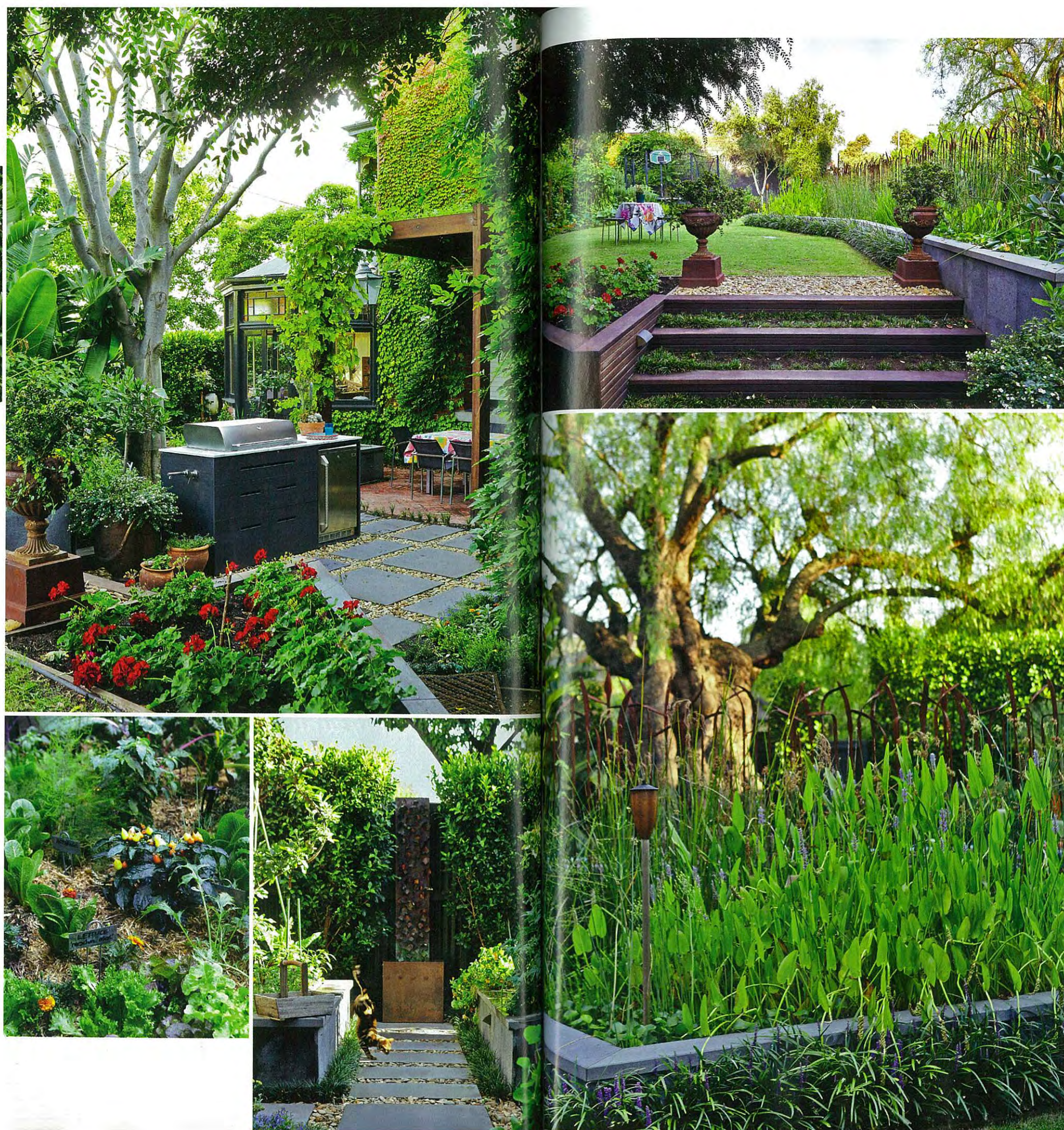


◀ Vegetables are grown organically and a Clo'ey composter turns food waste into nutrient-dense compost within days. Original bricks, bluestone blocks and old urns were all re-used, and low-energy LED lighting installed.

Caecilia's edible bounty includes herbs and vegetables in a series of raised beds handy to the kitchen; espaliered citrus trees against the north-facing side of the house; and a black muscat grapevine trained over the pergola. Throughout the back garden are olive, apple, cherry, nectarine, fig and avocado trees, along with blueberries and strawberries.

The front garden takes its cues from the Victorian-era facade of the house, complete with fairytale tower, but the formal layout is softened by rambling roses, pretty perennials and deciduous trees. In a shady bed, massed mophead as well as oakleaf hydrangeas, Mollis azaleas and daphne provide colour and fragrance to charm the eye and lift the spirits. ▶

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT A stone plinth and urn planted with Japanese sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*). 'Big Red' geraniums add colour to the barbecue area. Caecilia carved out terraces in the sloping back garden. 'Purple Beauty' capsicum. Marigolds are a natural pest deterrent. The pickerel rush in the pond, helpful for keeping the water clean, is also edible. The raised vegetable beds are in local bluestone, with a copper water feature at the end of the path. Kitchen plants include leafy greens and chilli.



PLANT PARTICULARS

- Caecilia's favourites:**
 Eastern redbud (*Cercis canadensis* 'Forest Pansy')
 'Black Genoa' fig trees
 Grass tree (*Xanthorrhoea*)
- Other key plants:**
 Irish strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*)
 Peppercorn tree (*Schinus molle*)
 Purple beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea')
 Chinese elm (*Ulmus parvifolia*)
 Smoke bush (*Cotinus coggygia*)
 Canary Island ivy (*Hedera canariensis*)
 Jointed twig rush (*Baumea articulata*)
 Tall spike rush (*Eleocharis sphacelata*)



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