



## Design Fusion

Sea views and neighbouring houses influence the landscape design of this upmarket Auckland property.

Words **Soraya Nicholas** Photography **Paul Davis**

**PURCHASING A PARCEL OF LAND** adjacent to your own home is the perfect way to create control over what's going on in your neighbourhood. This was precisely the case for this new house, which was built as a spec home by a couple who were keen to determine how the property would look, and what its surrounds would include. The new dwelling is contemporary and square in appearance, with a very muted colour palette, and this was something the owners were keen to reflect with

their landscaping. Designer Mark Read of Natural Habitats Landscape Design says that his "initial brief was to create a plan that would complement the area, and fit with the houses on either side, as well as with the architecture of this home."

Drawing on a modern colour theme of beiges and greys, Mark worked to achieve what he describes as a "modernist look". Flat, simple shapes feature throughout the garden, keeping the theme "generous and bold, while still having an element of softness."

The garden and patio area does appear larger than it in fact is, and its existence has been cleverly mapped out. Steps lead down from the house, to a solid entertaining area, with "a perfectly flat piece of lawn." This was no easy achievement given the generally steep nature of the site.

The actual plantings used were chosen to reflect an Asian-inspired concept. "There is an element of tropical here, but it's more of an Asian feel in a modern way." Palms link into the view to the sea, and green texture



Palm trees were chosen to draw on the tropical feel the sea view conjures. The landscaping of the neighbouring homes was also an influence.

**RIGHT** The built in seat was made from solid concrete, and later plastered, and appears suspended above the garden.



## Q&A

with **Mark Read**  
of **Natural Habitats Landscapes**

### *What considerations did you have in mind when designing this garden?*

The landscape plan had to be heavily integrated with the architecture of the house, and we wanted to create the maximum feel of space. Because this home shares a driveway, we wanted to give the property a feeling of privacy, to create a notion of ownership. Keeping a fairly restrained colour palette was also important.

### *Were there any obstacles to overcome?*

This site presented easy access, so there were little restrictions in that respect. The only minor issue was dealing with the boundary, as there are big houses on either side. Our goal was to reduce and soften this aspect, and once the plantings grow more, the effect will be even better.

### *What is unique about this garden?*

The fusion of hedges is rather unique, and the way we created the suspended seat. This was a theme replicated with the gas fire.

### *As a completed project, what makes this landscape design work?*

It's simplicity and restrained feel, while still being strong. The generosity of space, without being over done, and the balanced proportions of the landscaping in general. The contrasts between textures is also effective, as is how we have used the view.

### *Did the design of the home impact upon your landscape plan?*

Yes it did - we had to reflect the design in our plan. The house is very box like, with plain surfaces, so we continued the simple, strong shapes, and created a proud, robust landscape design. We wanted to increase the relationship between the house and its exterior.



is added through plants and hedging. The hardscape aspect of the landscaping is largely grey in appearance, “which is balanced by the reflective green of the garden.” Along the southern side of the house, loose pebbles were placed to tie into the grey based theme of the hard materials, and this area links the garden to the utility portion of the exterior. “It also adds texture and softness overall,” explains Mark.

What makes this landscape most unique is the built in, plaster covered concrete seat. Seemingly suspended above ground, the seat represents a “morphing of hard and soft,” with a line of hedging beneath. This idea was further expanded upon for the gas fire. “It will appear to float once the hedges grow, and it is enhanced by built in lighting.” The fire is also a wonderful way to capitalise on outdoor entertaining, and is becoming a popular inclusion in many new home designs.

Mark is proud of the design he executed for this garden, and enjoyed having a virtual “free rein” when it came to the plan. “This is the ultimate in integrated landscape design,” says Mark, of the way he works, first creating the plan then being actively involved in the installation. “Here we have a warm, summery feel, with a great contrast between the deep greens of the foliage and the grey based hard surfaces. It creates a very light reflective atmosphere.” ■

**Natural Habitats Landscapes**  
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**ABOVE** Basalt tiles in 100x100 squares form the patio area. The grey based colour is reflected by the other hard materials used to form the landscape.

**BELOW** Stepped down from the house, the garden was designed to appear larger than it actually is. A flat rectangular lawn is a graphic display of green, and adds texture to what is a very muted exterior colour palette.

