

Link with the bush a natural solution

■ Katie Lee

A mature jarrah forest was juxtaposed with a contemporary abode on this Gidgegannup property, providing Wild About Gardens director and landscape designer Sue Torlach with the challenge of creating a seamless link between the natural and man-made elements.

"The brief for the design was to create outdoor living areas, which would link the home with its surrounds and enable the owners to enjoy the space more effectively," Ms Torlach said.

"The owners loved the views from the house but didn't feel they were making the most of outdoor entertaining and the house looked as if it was perched on the block rather than part of it."

With plenty of natural greenery already surrounding the home, Ms Torlach decided to pare back the plantings — a departure from her normal style of working with large volumes of planting for shade and ambience.

"The home has a lovely aspect overlooking a lake through jarrah forest, so it was agreed that there was no need for an artificial garden around the

home; instead, the design aimed to create outdoor living areas to maximise the owners' enjoyment of the natural beauty of the site," she explained.

The sloping site was overcome with a curved area of crazy stone paving from Eco Outdoor at the rear, along with rendered retaining walls, timber and stone steps and built-in seating, from which the owners could connect with the view.

"I selected crazy stone paving for the back as it has a natural look and gives some interest to the area," Ms Torlach said. "Also, the owners didn't want to have to be sweeping the paving everyday — the leaves dropping from the surrounding trees and dust that can blow in on a semi-rural property would have looked out of place on a pristine paved area.

"I wanted a very simple backdrop for the paving and the dark blue/grey rendered seating works well; the height of the seating is comfortable but doesn't obstruct the views to the lake."

An iron fire pit from Eco Outdoor sits in the middle of the open-air paving, which provides a striking feature at night and one used often by the owners.

"This area is adjacent to an

existing alfresco area and there was a small sloping section of earth between the alfresco area and the house with some large boulders of coffee rock," Ms Torlach said. "To make this more attractive, I suggested a layer of fine black basalt gravel to highlight the coffee rock and some large cycads as feature planting."

Compacted gravel paths were installed below this area to lead into the bush, while a large curved timber day bed doubles as storage.

Ms Torlach said the front garden was like "a crater, with a sunken area of hard-baked clay soil".

"My solution here was to use an area of angled decking designed to capture the winter sun," she said. "The funky angle of the decking complements the home and the grasses provide a softening link between the built aspects and the surrounding landscape."

A large iron water bowl from Shedwallah has been cut into the deck to add interest. The bowl is already home to some local frogs and the owners now enjoy soaking up the winter sun from their front deck.

Ms Torlach said incorporating existing elements into a new



An iron fire pit provides a striking feature at night.

design and connecting spaces was challenging but ultimately rewarding; the project now marries contemporary design with timeless natural elements.

It was constructed by Grassroots Exteriors, with the lighting designed and installed by The Garden Light Company.

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