

Sweet retreat

With this Balinese-style backyard retreat, who would ever want to leave home again?

Words: Terry Meehan
Photos: Patrick Redmond

An authentic thatch-topped Balinese hut, natural stone pavers and a long reflection pond are just three of the many features that combine to make this once humble backyard a Balinese-style retreat. Can you imagine a better place in which to escape? Somewhere removed from the everyday hustle and bustle and located right outside your back door?

Having made an annual pilgrimage to Indonesia for the past 10 years, the owners of this Melbourne property decided it was time to have a bit of Bali all year round. Their first port of call was to engage David Kirkpatrick from Outdoor Creations to come up with the design for their new retreat. Concepts were drawn, adjustments made and a final design agreed on. The next step for the owners was to select a landscape construction company to

undertake the project, which is where I, and my construction team at Seasons Landscape, entered the equation.

Once all council requirements for town planning and building permits were in place it was time to commence construction, a phase of the project that was quite tricky due to limited access and a sloping block. It required a lot of planning when receiving deliveries because there was only a single-car garage at the top of the property to store materials. This meant the next delivery couldn't be received until the previous materials had been used.

The logistics sorted, our first task was to plot the pond, measuring from the house and setting levels to the existing floor levels. The pond was constructed with a concrete base and reinforced concrete-filled block walls capped to match the paved areas. To

“Can you imagine a better place in which to escape?”



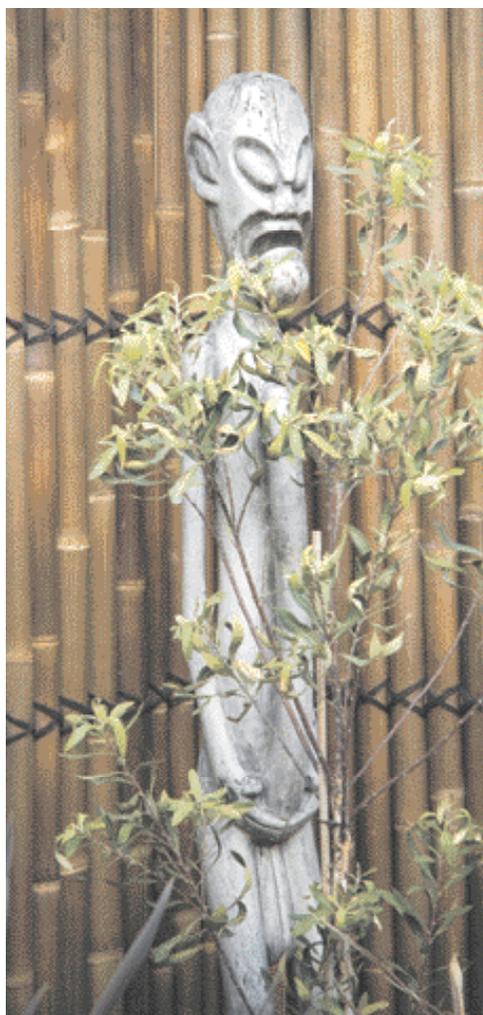
guarantee a leak-free pond, the interior is made of fibreglass. To keep the pond water clean, healthy and to minimise maintenance, a bio-filter with UV clarifier was installed.

Six submersible low-voltage pond lights create spectacular night viewing, highlighting two nearby urns set atop pedestals and sending out a rippling effect on the surrounding surfaces. To maintain water levels in the pond, a rainwater diverter was connected to an existing downpipe. The pond also has an overflow diverter to disperse excess water around the garden.

Concrete was pumped on-site for paving bases and large-format 600mm x 600mm natural stone pavers were laid on a mortar bed. Natural stone was chosen for its durability, varying texture and colour blends, which complement the surrounding materials and the house. →



garden profile



As the garden is viewed from an open-plan kitchen, lounge and dining room, having the deck at floor level created a seamless transition between interior and exterior spaces. The hardwood deck flows through the garden at the same level as the house interior, with just one step down to the pond edge. The width of the hardwood decking timber — as well as the direction it runs in — was matched to the existing interior floorboards.

The Balinese hut was bought in kit form and imported from Indonesia. It was a simple matter of matching this panel to that panel, so it was quick to assemble and, once in place, really started to set the theme.

The intention of the planting theme was to make the Balinese-style retreat feel as lush as possible but still keep to the council's requirements for low water usage. Some of the hardy feature plants chosen for their foliage were spineless agaves, soft-tipped yuccas and several varieties of cordyline. For screening there is one of the newer magnolias, the longer-flowering *Magnolia 'Kay Parris'*, native frangipani and clumping bamboo varieties.

For ease of maintenance and to make the garden as water-wise as possible, we installed

sub-surface in-line drippers for irrigation to all garden beds and topped each with recycled mulch to hold the moisture in the soil.

The various garden ornaments, which were gathered by the owners over a period of time, add a personal touch to the landscape and help to cement the Balinese theme.

The final task, and the one that really brought the Balinese-inspired design alive, was cladding the surrounds with black bamboo. The 2m x 1m bamboo panels, held together by timber rails and decorative rope, were attached to the existing boundary fences. With that done the transformation — from a sloping backyard that was little more than an expanse of patchy lawn to a private Balinese retreat — was complete.

And it is a retreat built to be enjoyed for many years to come. Who knows, maybe one day the owners will no longer venture to Indonesia quite so often, choosing instead to stay right at home in their own little piece of paradise. ■

Terry Meehan is the director of Seasons Landscape, a Melbourne-based landscape design and construction company.