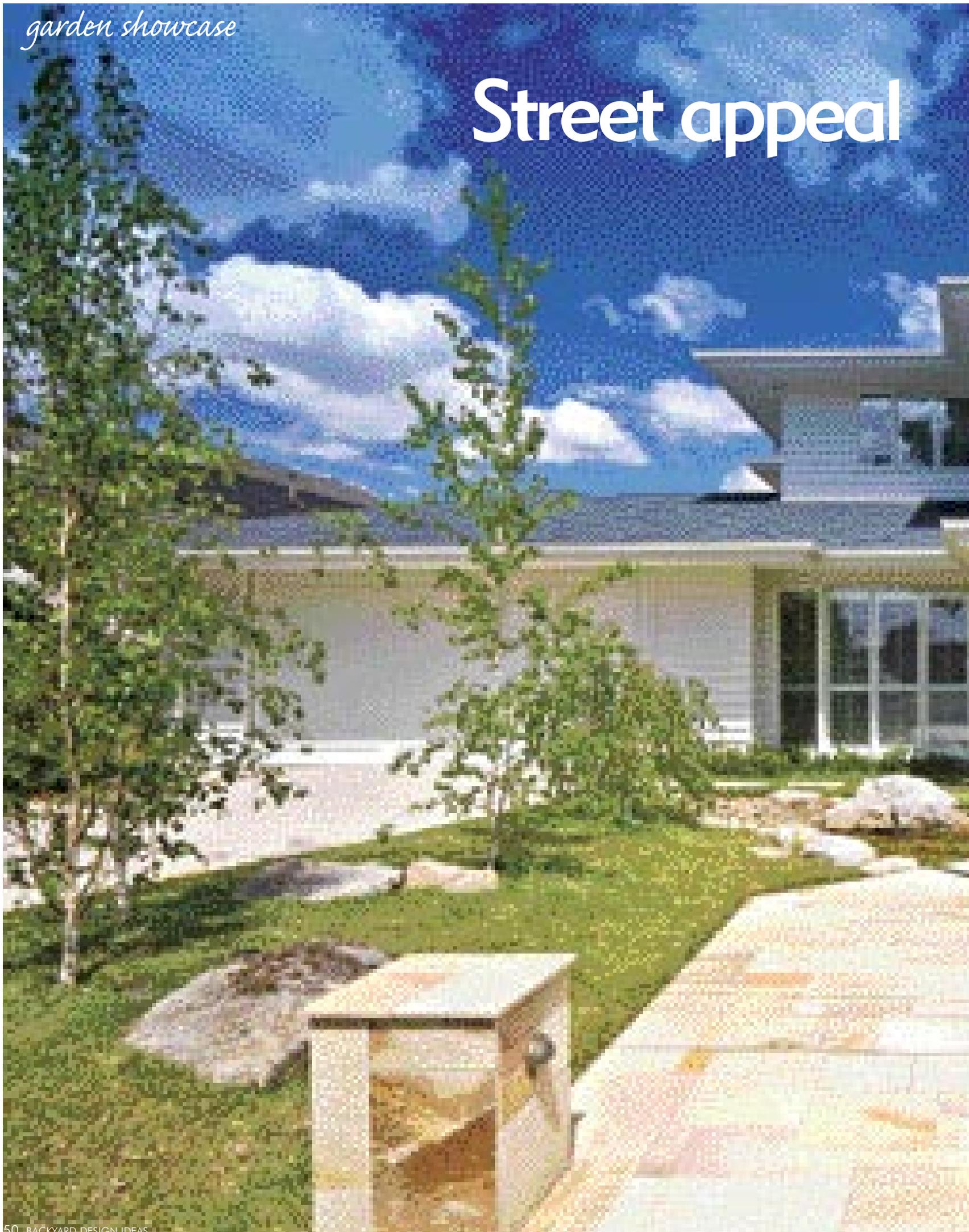


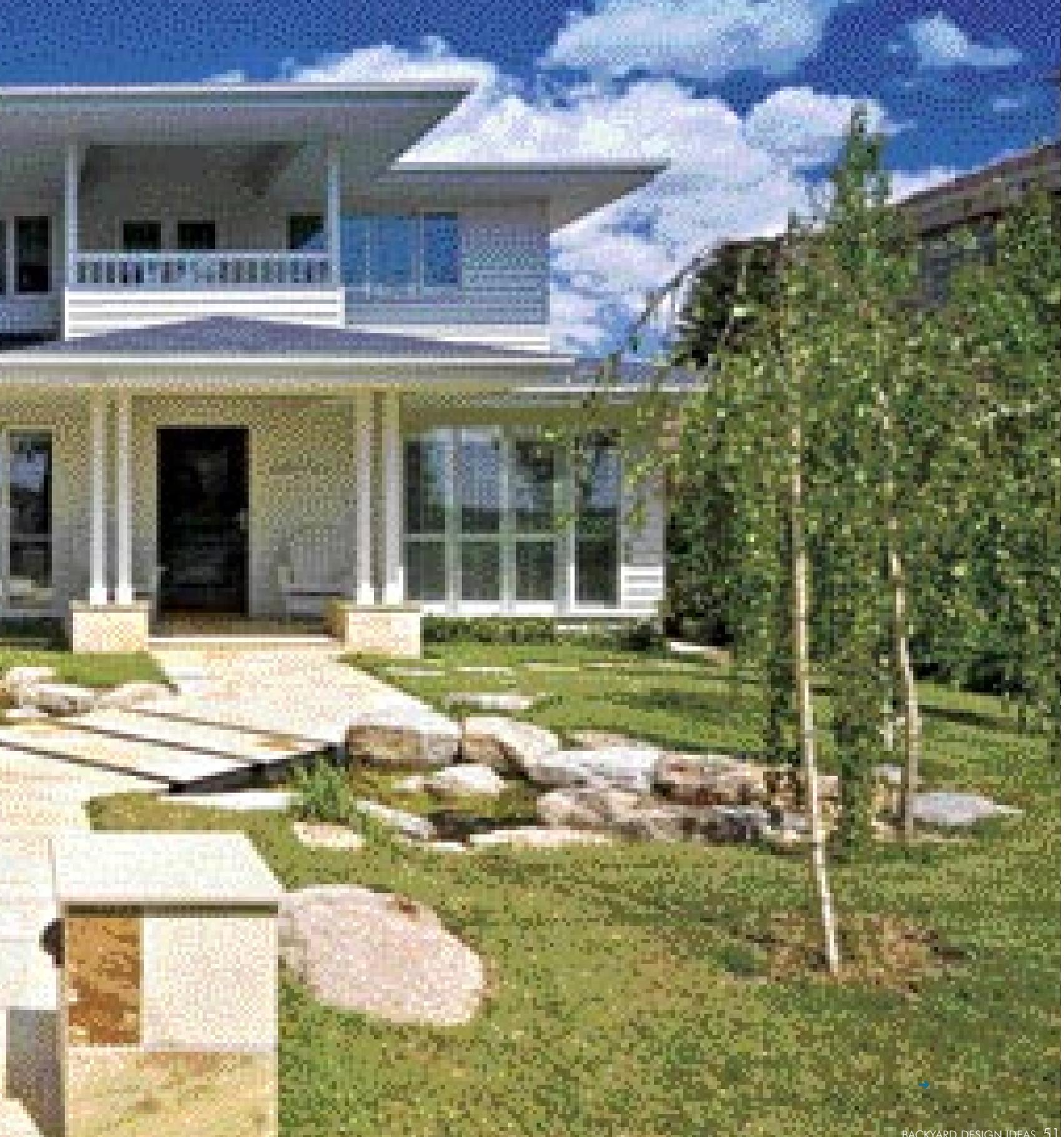
garden showcase

Street appeal



This Melbourne garden has a wonderfully open feel and a real sense of place

Story: Karen Booth
Photos: Patrick Redmond





The home may be American ranch style but the front garden is quintessentially Australian, with its abundance of natural stone and authentic-looking bushland creek water feature.

This intriguing new landscape design was implemented after the house underwent a major renovation. The result is a unique multifunctional garden with a distinctive sense of style.

Drawing heavily on the surrounding environment, the front garden references a nearby park. Note how the lawn has been mounded to emulate the natural undulations of the parkland and to conceal the road.

Created for a professional couple with young children, the garden was constructed by Seasons Landscapes to a design devised by David Kirkpatrick and Joshua Dennis of Outdoor Creations.

"The owners wanted an open design that would flow through to the park across the road," says Terry Meehan of Seasons Landscapes.

"I would describe the garden as very natural in terms of style with just a hint of the modern in the sharp lines of the sandstone pavers and stepping stones. One of the design elements I am most fond of is the naturally formed water feature and granite rock set down low between the grass mounds. By setting the pond at such a low point we were able to create a truly natural effect and have the feature work as a water-catchment device.

"Silver birch, both weeping and tree form, is the dominant planting through the lawn area. These were chosen for discreet privacy and strategically placed to screen rooms in the house without taking away views. The other reason for choosing them was that they blend so well with the house colours."

When day folds into night, in-ground, low-voltage lighting illuminates the birch "forest", creating a spectacular effect against the ghostly white bark. Lighting is also used to make the stepping stones over the water feature appear as if they are floating.

But the garden makeover didn't stop at the front of the property. It extended along the side of the house and into the back garden.



Step into the rear garden and you will find a series of rooms, or activity spaces, including an open lawn play area with cubby house and sandbox, a merbau timber deck incorporating a stone water feature and a raised entertainment area.

A lap pool stretches along the side of the house, making the most of the limited space and softening the look of the boundary. This softening effect is further enhanced by the incorporation of a water feature fashioned from angled segmented wall panels and sequential fountains,

which generates movement and creates a welcome sense of increased depth.

You can enjoy the pool and water feature from two vantage points. Either from the timber deck that extends from the back of the home or from the white-painted timber seats perched on a paved area at the far end of the pool.

While the side and back gardens show just what a family affair this property is, it's the front garden that continues to garner the most comments and attention.

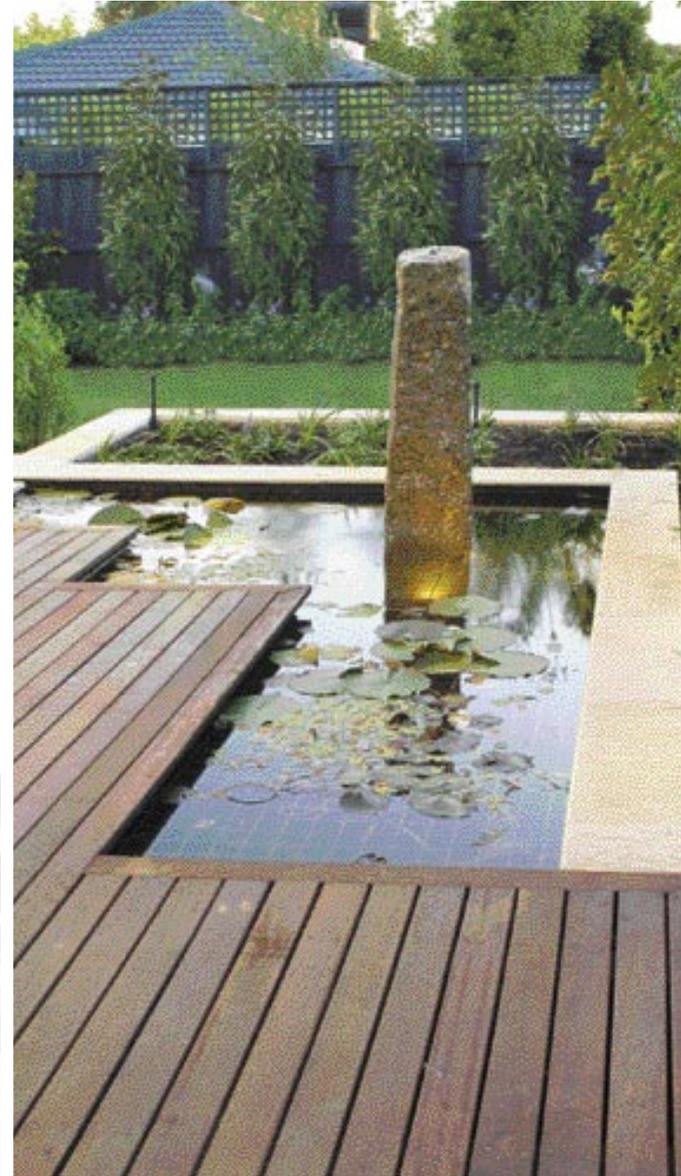
"Usually the first consideration for a front yard design is privacy, which can be achieved in a number of ways. For complete privacy you could opt for solid front fences, a thick dense hedge planting or a combination of both. For moderate privacy, as is the case here, thoughtful tree placement can obscure but not completely block out views," says Terry.

"In a front garden you also need to highlight how you want people to enter your house," he adds. "If you have a solid driveway, incorporate a path into one side of it to encourage people to move in that direction. It may be highlighted by a wider path-width border or a change in paving surface or pattern.

"If you have the room, separate your driveway from your entrance path with planting, lawn or by placing a feature in-between. Also, use different paving surfaces and patterns but always remember it is important that the two different surface styles work together. If it is just a path to the front entrance and peripheral paths are required, use stepping stones in square or random shapes.

"To achieve maximum street appeal you need focal points. These might be water features, artworks, trees or seating surrounding large trees. In terms of overall design, the landscape needs to complement the house. This can be achieved through flower and foliage colours and paving selection. For an older-style house with a more traditional design, go contemporary at the rear if desired."

* This garden won for Seasons Landscapes the Residential Landscape up to \$50,000 category in the 2005 Landscape Industries Association of Victoria Awards of Excellence. ■



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