

## DECKED OUT

By Jeanette Leigh

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Landscape architect Allan Wyatt from ERM creates vast gardens in international resorts and cities; however he extracts as much joy from solving the challenges of a tiny courtyard garden.

“A smaller garden gets you thinking carefully about how every square inch is used. In a recent commission for a 4 x 4 metre backyard in Middle Park, I incorporated a bench seat with cushions that could be stored underneath, and a table.

“The site had serious drainage issues and was wet and sloppy underfoot so I built a deck. Now it is a pleasant, well used outdoor room.”

The style of planting makes this space quite unique. Rather than following the tendency of many courtyard owners by trying to fill a small space with too many plants, Wyatt has chosen a simple planting palette inspired by European forests.

“I planted 50 silver birch trees in a few square meters. This is how they grow in copses in Norway and Italy, very close together. There is beauty in the fine detail of the trees; the textures of the paper birch and their varying heights.”

A sense of space can be achieved through the treatment of boundaries. Areas can be hidden or angled through placement of vegetation. And rather than painting the fence mission brown and screening it with shrubs and trees, depth and varying planes can be achieved even in small gardens through using materials in different ways.

“French style landscape architecture hides boundaries to imply that there is more behind. You can apply this concept in smaller spaces to create interest. So rather than standing at the kitchen sink and having everything revealed, you are enticed to go outside to view the mystery,” says Wyatt.

Be bold. Apply coloured stucco or painted metal panels.

“Don’t be afraid to introduce texture and colour to the landscape. A bright red rectangle of colour on a fence provides the air of a Mondrian painting. To complement this minimalist approach a specially designed slab of marble for a table is a stunning feature. It has its own unique patina and doesn’t require maintenance. It will last forever. Our environment is harsh so stone works well,” advises Wyatt.

And, if you are not the greatest gardener, Allan Wyatt recommends sticking to the “weed” varieties of plants.

“Agapanthus varieties, strap leaf plants, *Pennisetum alopecuroides*, (Swamp Foxtail or Fountain Grass) will survive anything.”