

Breaking the rules

Make your own garden retreat to relax, restore and refresh body and soul – you do not even have to follow the rules!



WORDS: Renée Wright, PHOTOGRAPHY: Eliza Roux

A

garden retreat is a place of seclusion, a quiet nook where one can take time out and collect yourself.

A garden retreat needs to be a personalised space, an area which fits your personality and into which you can merge with consummate ease ... a place where you can break all the rules!

This month's garden is as colourful and richly layered in interest as its owners. The design guidelines for the appropriate use of ornamentation have been stretched to the limit to satisfy the couple's contrasting tastes.

The most visible flower bed, as viewed from the main entertainment area, contains a playful statue of a small boy on a rocket, encircled by white Iceberg roses and sitting proud in a planting bed with a veritable explosion of colour. Three further statuettes grace a bare wall next to the carport – one of a playful girl with a kite, another boy fishing and proudly displaying his catch, and the last of a boy enjoying a game of throw and catch. They are perched on large urns and backed by rustic wooden trellises, making an eye-catching focal point.

A sandstone wishing well is framed by an arch covered in fragrant star jasmine, from which a bird feeder hangs. A playful lily trotter skirts the surface of the water. Tucked under a shady enclosure of trees sits an elegant wrought iron bench. In the raised bed behind it, foliage colour and textures are mingled with cheerful begonias. This corner allows a reverse view of the garden and has two dry planting beds as its prime focal points. One bed contains a single quiver

tree, offset by sandstone chunks in a crazy paving pattern with champagne-coloured gravel, a few larger river stones and a decorative bowl of small succulents to the side. The other bed contains a *Pachypodium*, a ponytail palm, rock roses and pin cushions in fine gravel – a true feast of texture!

A small bed to the back contains yet more varied succulents and river stones, juxtaposed by the addition of a cool millstone filled with water – simple, beautiful pleasures ...

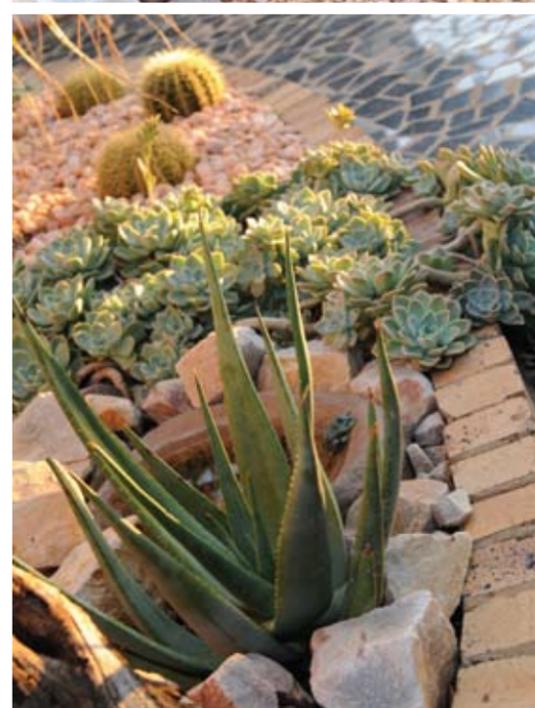
The access path between the succulent beds is made with chunks of smooth, black granite – an unusual walkway providing richly layered interest to an area designed to show off texture.

A fever tree hides a prized wooden giraffe peeking shyly through its canopy. At its feet two secretary birds edge towards a water-filled millstone for a drink. At the entrance to the enclosure, an old tram wheel turned sideways makes an interesting planter. Earthy pillars around the garden provide an elegant stage for beautiful fuchsias in pots.

Water is scattered around the garden in a multitude of receptacles. A modern ball water feature gurgles gently near the patio; the wishing well is another source, as are the many millstones.

Modern square pots with beautiful *Abelia* balls provide a feeling of enclosure to the patio and find an echo in two large, modern sculptures on the opposite side of the garden.

This jam-packed garden contains many contrasting elements, and yet magically it works! What is even better is that it works supremely well for its owners, just as a retreat should!



Top tip
Make your garden your own – it is more important that you truly enjoy it, than it is to follow design rules to the letter. An understanding professional will help you break the rules with flair and balance.



A memory in the shape of a much loved giraffe peeks through the contrasting foliage of a fever tree.

10 ways to create your own retreat

- 1 A space with a feeling of enclosure and intimacy will confer the atmosphere that is needed – you do not need huge spaces to create a retreat corner.
- 2 Create a space that can be accessed easily. Going to your quiet space should not be difficult.
- 3 Make the space comfortable – you will not use it if you first have to drag furniture into it.
- 4 Personalise the space with what is meaningful and pleasing to you.
- 5 The effect of the soothing sound of running water contributes to a feeling of tranquility in a way quite unmatched by any other medium.
- 6 Engaging all the senses aids the process of just being. Ensure that some fragrant plants are near enough to experience.
- 7 Have something pleasant to look out onto: it could be a view of a focal point, like a structural plant, a pot, a bird bath or anything that engages you.
- 8 Learn a few stillness or breathing exercises to help steady your mind, or simply have a cup of tea.
- 9 Make use of your quiet space every day.
- 10 When you are in your quiet space, remind yourself that for the next five or ten or fifty minutes, just being is the most worthwhile thing that you could be doing!



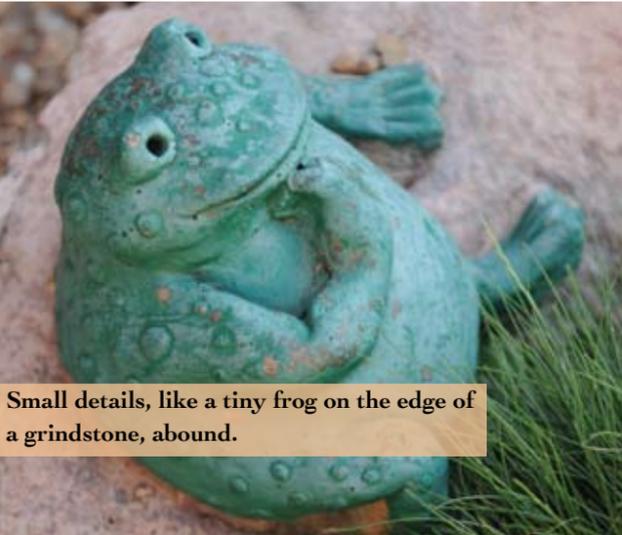
- Plant list**
- 1 Fever tree (*Acacia xanthophloea*)
 - 2 Leopard tree (*Caesalpinia ferrea*)
 - 3 White Iceberg roses
 - 4 Perennial mix of erigeron, salvia, *Diascia*, *Gaura* spp
 - 5 *Cyathea australis*
 - 6 *Acorus gramineus* 'Golden Edge'
 - 7 Fuchsia spp
 - 8 Begonia spp
 - 9 *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Kyoto Dwarf'
 - 10 *Beaucarnia recurvata*
 - 11 Quiver tree
 - 12 Succulent mix
 - 13 *Abelia grandiflora*



The edge of the pool is given enclosure by five elegant pots with rounded *Abelia* topiary balls as a strong, yet simplistic statement.



"In the bustle of life, in the pressure of decisions, peace has become a luxury. Take it when it comes, and cherish it. It gives you the time to breathe. It gives you rest and hope and life."
Pam Brown (1865 – 1940)



Small details, like a tiny frog on the edge of a grindstone, abound.





A richly detailed statue of a small boy exudes exuberant fun, and in many ways sets the tone for the garden.



This jam-packed garden contains many contrasting elements, and yet magically it works!

