

My garden is my world... by design!

"I really wanted a modern garden based on curves. One is used to seeing gardens predominantly designed with ground patterns in geometric shapes, but I wanted to show a thoroughly updated version – definitely not like grandmother's old snake imitations!" – Renée Wright.

Any medium to large suburban garden can be turned into a wonder world with different gardening themes and influences from across the globe. All it takes is imagination, good planning and lots of energy and enthusiasm. Renée Wright, from Pretoria, has no shortage of any of the above – just take a look at her garden.

We entered the garden through a circular wrought iron gate in the shape of the Yin Yang symbol. This symbol also served as the inspiration for the overall design of the garden – five different themes that merge seamlessly into each other.

By imitating the curve running through

the centre of the symbol, Renée's pathway leads you past textured planting with ground covers, interesting focal points, water features and places of contemplation and then jumps cheekily over a straight and formal walkway that links the modern meditation garden to a formal Italian garden and beyond.

Modern meditation garden

The modern garden has an Oriental atmosphere. At its centre is a circular wooden deck enclosed by a wall of slate off-cuts set vertically and evoking images of dragon's teeth. Close by is a 'wall of water' – a circular screening wall clad in elegant slate with a film of water sliding down it and dripping peacefully into a circular trough at its base.



The deck has a meditative feel about it and it only takes a few scatter cushions to make you feel you are invited to come and do some relaxing breathing exercises.



NANDINA domestica 'Pygmaea' (dwarf heavenly bamboo) forms part of the foliage border around the wooden deck.

Along the pathway, with the formal Italian garden in sight, you pass another water feature cleverly put together with left-over slate and an ordinary concrete ball painted in a fiery colour to pick up the bright winter shades of the Nandina. A thick carpet of mint grows between the pieces of slate.

The curved water feature (which is shown in greater detail on the previous page) is a practical but smart solution to a common problem: it hides the area of the garden that contains the usual household clutter of washing lines and dog kennels. The water feature is complemented by very simple Oriental-type planting and is decorated by stone Foo dogs.

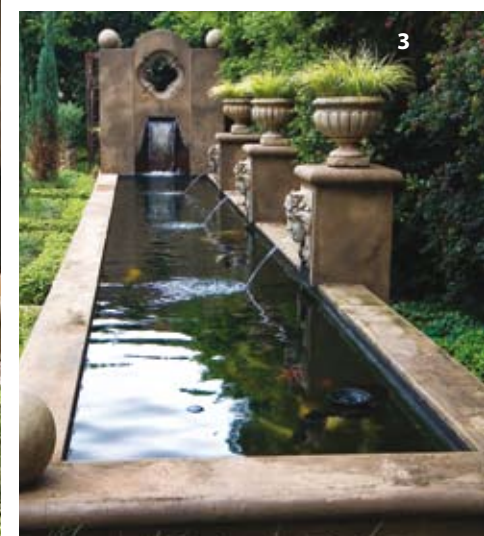
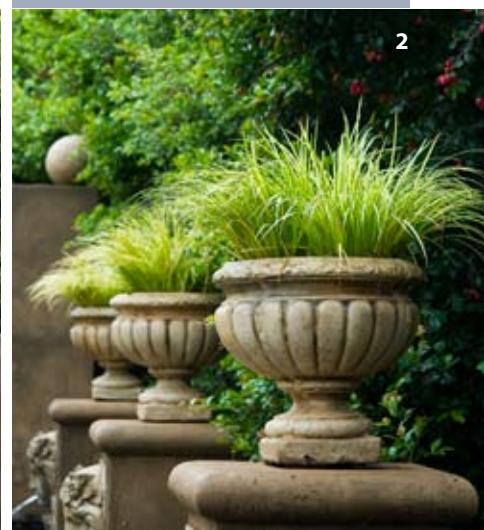
Formal and classical Italian

Renée says of her Italian garden: "It is the essence of timeless simplicity – the perfect illustration of 'less is more'. I wanted to show how a limited plant selection combined in a simple floor pattern and with strong focal points as counter-balance, can not only be very successful, but truly dramatic too."

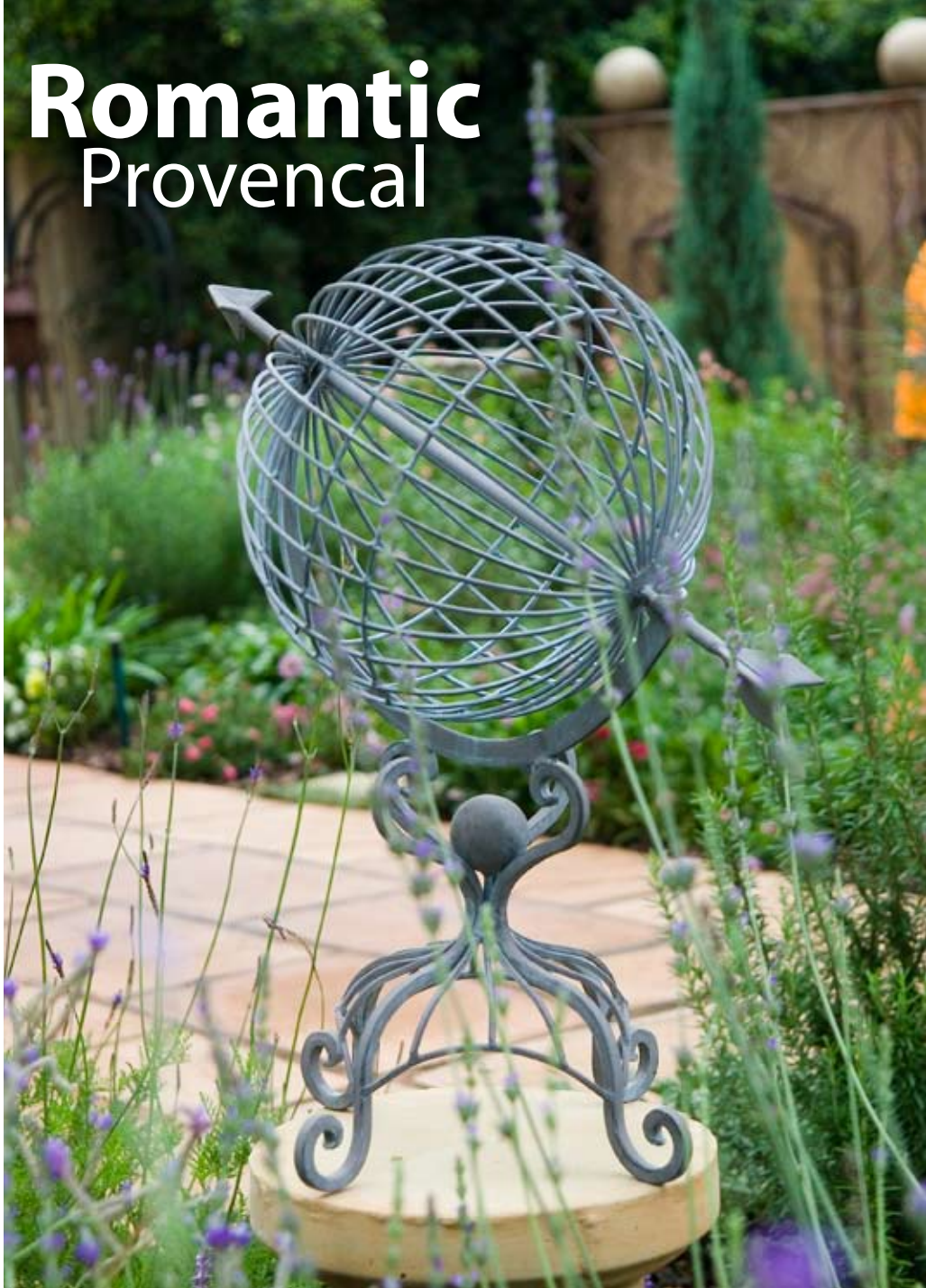
1. Slim-line pencil conifers (*JUNIPERUS scopulorum* 'Skyrocket') frame the walkway and are surrounded by blocks of dark green mondo grass (*OPHIOPOGON japonicus*), boxed in with the contrasting golden foliage of *ABELIA x grandiflora* 'Francis Mason'.

2. 'Cheeky' ornamental grass (*ACORUS gramineus*) graces classically-shaped cement pots placed on sturdy pillars. The grass forms a link to the modern garden where it is planted *en masse*.

3. Water spouts from the lips of mythical stone goddesses into a dark, deep and narrow koi pond.



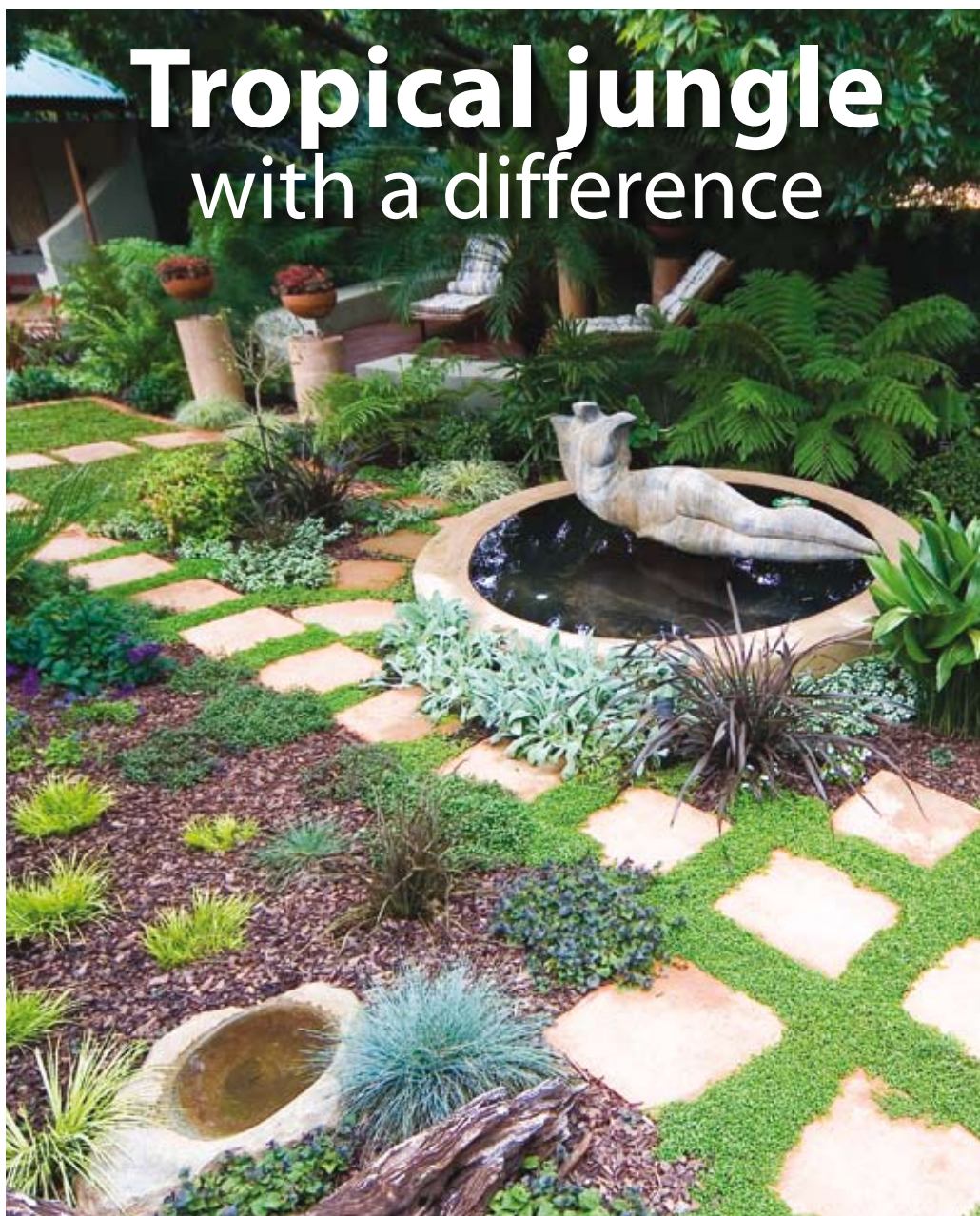
Romantic Provencal



"On a terrace next to the formal garden is a section where I have given myself permission to just have fun! I wanted colour, lots of angels and playful elements. This area shows how complete frivolity can be held together by adhering to a few rules:

- Lead the eye through abundance with appropriate focal points.
- Keep to a limited colour palette in spite of having much plant variety.
- Remember that the purpose of this type of planting is a kind of orchestrated chaos.
- Gardening does not have to be a serious business – you must always have fun!" – Renée.

Tropical jungle with a difference



More surprises await along the side of the house. Renée says: "I wanted to prove that a shade garden can be colourful and should not necessarily be the overgrown jungle that you so often see, while still utilizing old favourites such as cycads, palms and a gorgeous philodendron.

By using the bold and strong foliage shapes in a restrained manner, the garden retains a very elegant yet supremely relaxed and lush feel. In this section I have also kept to my circular and geometric floor patterns. There are two areas of shade lawn – a perfect circle on the one side and a perfect square on the other side and they lend a strong pattern to the garden, successfully setting off the informal planting style."

1. The reflective pond, with barely circulating water and a modern female form suspended over it, brings the garden into the modern era.

2. Foliage contrasts and interest created by different textures reign supreme. There are not that many flowers here, but there is plenty of seasonal interest and no shortage of colour.



The half circle wooden deck calls for you to settle down in the shade with a book. Stout but elegant pillars bear half moon bowls that echo the shape of the deck and frame the entrance to this secluded area.



African Chic

The sunny corner in the back garden was the ideal place to play around with tough indigenous favourites. As the gazebo sometimes tends to be too cool Renée decided to 'push the boundaries' and use plants and décor in shades of orange and red.

1. The fast moving water of the natural rock water feature supplies energy but also 'tames' the warm colours in this sunny spot.

2. Renée warmed the interior of the gazebo with the hottest African colour – red! The modern ethnic pattern on the décor lends a feeling of warmth and comfort while the earthy pot's gurgling water invites one to linger in this garden outpost. At night the Milky Way, recreated in reflective paint on the inside of the gazebo roof, adds to the magical atmosphere.

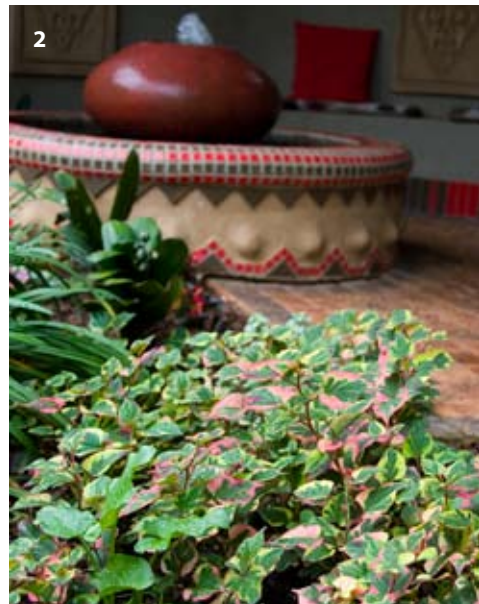
3. Remember to include harder elements, like pots, to enhance your intended colour scheme. Don't be afraid to play around with strong colours and shapes, especially if the plants in an area are too young to flower or the season does not allow it. ☺

Thanks to Renée Wright of Eco Landscapes, contact: **012 361 9644, 083 271 0880** or e-mail: info@ecolandscapes.co.za. Renée welcomes visitors to her garden, which is at 10 Glenwood Street, Lynnwood Glen, Pretoria. www.ecolandscapes.co.za.

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