

Joyful

summer gardens

Take the time this summer season to transform your garden into one fit for family, friends and feasting



Active use of our outdoor spaces is as natural as breathing to any South African, particularly over the festive season when we receive family and friends en masse! This is when we usually find out if our garden spaces are large enough, accessible for all and well designed to accommodate the whole family.

If your garden is perhaps falling a bit short, use the opportunity to assess it thoroughly and map out a plan of action to have it ship-shape by next year.

Step 1: Assessment

Useful questions to ask:

- What is the usual number of guests being entertained?
- Can we comfortably accommodate this number?
- Are areas comfortable to move around in and easily accessible?
- Does the area accommodate your way of entertaining, i.e. is the barbeque large enough and do you really need that outdoor pizza oven?
- Are there convenient spaces to store frequently used items and portable

barbeque units?

Step 2: The wish list

- Carefully consider which elements will provide the most use and enjoyment.
- The whole family's needs should be considered – including pets!
- Consider the changing dynamics of the family – children grow up and grandchildren arrive. This will have a significant impact on long-term planning.

Step 3: Reality check

- Be realistic about the garden's capacity – it

is as important as having a well considered wish list. If you live in a tiny townhouse, your extended family of 72 members is just not going to fit! However, clever planning can bridge many a gap.

- Obtain cost estimates on the larger items – this may help shape your decision.

Step 4: The plan of action

Reworking your outdoor room may require a few years or simply a season – follow this general order of activity:

- Get the messy work done first: finish all building, paving and construction work before you do any planting.
- Take the opportunity to trim large trees and move larger plants which may be problematic.
- Install irrigation now as part of the disruptive work phase, and add the conduit for the electrical cabling for future garden lights in the same trenches. You can then install them later when your budget allows.

This will save much digging at a later stage, when the garden is just starting to establish itself.

- Adapt the planting design for year-round colour and interest. Make sure that the skeleton of the garden is colourful even if there is not a single flower in sight!

Top tip:
The frustration of an impractical design quickly usurps the enjoyment of beauty in a garden. The successful and intelligent merging of these two aspects shape the enjoyment of the garden.

Family favourite

This month's garden epitomises an outdoor living space designed to embrace all visitors. Outdoor living centres around a cool lapa enclosure, immediately adjacent to a small babbling brook. The small waterfall starts in the corner and wraps its way around this space, culminating in a small koi pond at the lower end of the garden. The garden slopes up as you leave the house, and this facilitates enjoyment of the ground pattern very well.

It is interesting to note that such a large garden, which is also an entertainer's dream,

contains no lawned area – and most visitors do not even notice the fact until it is pointed out. Paving, stepping stones and gravel provide user-friendly surfaces and virtually eliminates weekly maintenance.

Functional levels

The lowest level of the garden houses the swimming pool, a collection of pots with rare plants and a chess board laid into the paving. Mental exertion exists right alongside decadent relaxation!

On the next level from here, the garden maintains a gentle and user-friendly slope and houses the lapa. A small seating area to the side of a family-size table is enveloped in cool tranquillity – perfect for when Mom and Dad want a rare quiet meal together. A built-in counter all along one side of the lapa provides functional buffet space, storage room underneath and also houses the barbeque unit.

Two loungers in the open area adjacent to the lapa beckons to one to relax and enjoy

a book in the shade of the large old jacaranda tree.

Across the way, a small gazebo with a built-in wooden wrap-around bench serves as a pavilion to the tennis court. It can also double as a children's table during large functions or for an intimate tea party. The large *Strelitzia nicolai* behind it create a sense of enclosure, and the experience of

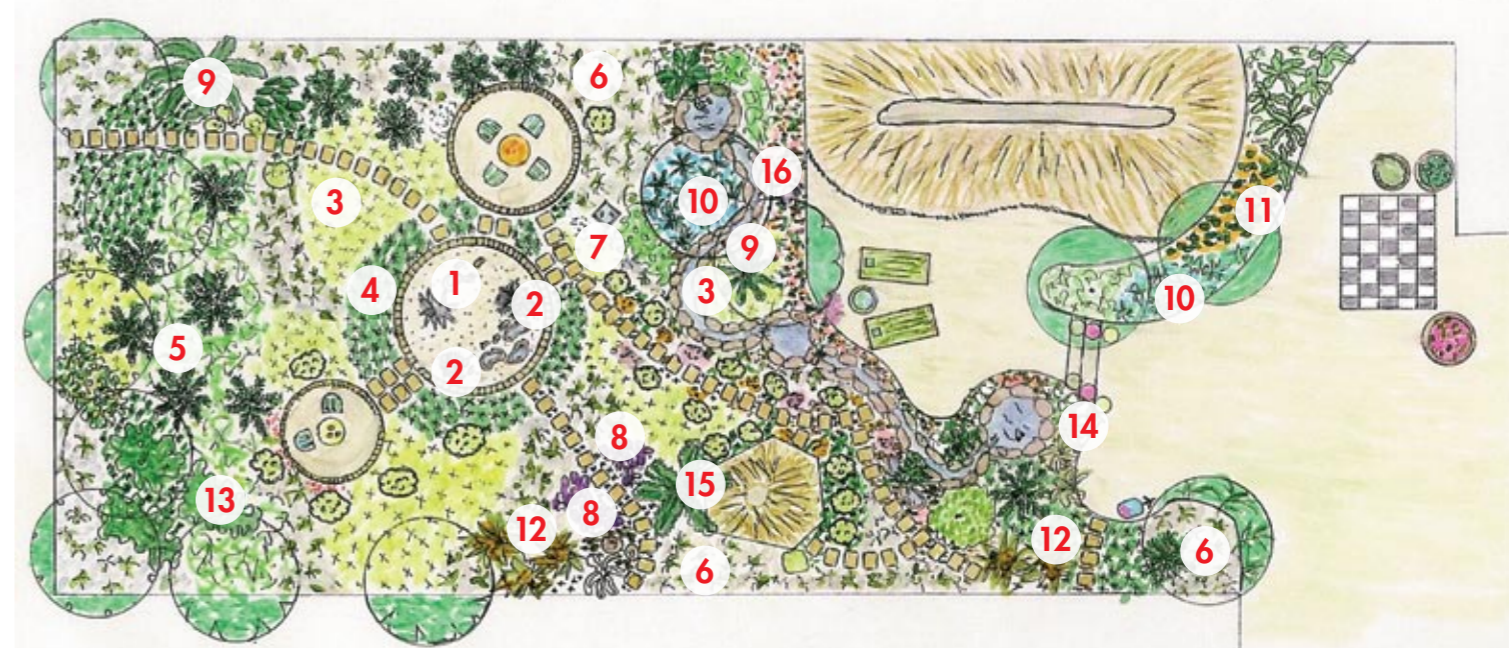
the natural rock waterscape once again is immediate.

Star performers

Winding your way into the final garden room, one comes upon a gravel circle proudly displaying prized cycads in an edged gravel circle. Mass plantings of ornamental grasses and a well chosen sunny spot put the spotlight firmly on the star performers.

On both sides of the gravel circle an additional paving circle has been created. A dainty bistro table and chair provide a sunny nook for an early morning cup of tea, or perhaps a sundowner for two. The





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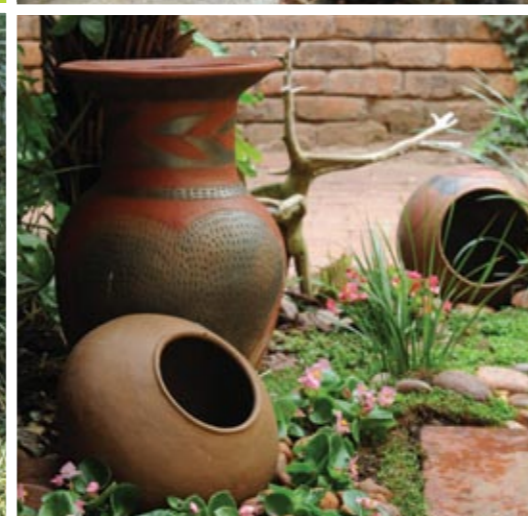


other circular space accommodates an old-fashioned but much loved garden set, with deep chairs serving as a cool reading room where you can curl up and lose yourself in the story.

The three circles in this area lend just sufficient form to give the garden a stylised feel, but at the same time leave it totally free and natural.

The ambience of the garden is shaped by the obvious intention to welcome its visitors into comfort. The garden is wholesome, beautiful and welcoming, evoking memories of hospitality of a bygone era, when people took the time to stop to appreciate each other, good food and beautiful surroundings. 🍃

- Plant list**
1. *Aloe pillansii*
 2. *Encephalartos cupidus*
 3. *Acorus gramineus* 'Golden Edge'
 4. Mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus*)
 5. *Asparagus sprengeri*
 6. *Ophiopogon jaburan* 'Vittatus'
 7. *Diaxia* spp
 8. *Plectranthus* 'Mona Lavender'
 9. *Encephalartos* spp
 10. *Agapanthus praecox*
 11. *Clivia miniata*
 12. *Strelitzia reginae*
 13. *Philodendron selloum*
 14. *Zantedeschia aethiopica*
 15. *Strelitzia nicolai*
 16. Begonia – pink/red



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