



Going Greener

Sustainable gardening practices form the foundation of this idyllic Western Cape garden

BY MADISON MOULTON

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ith sweeping views of CapeTown and the presence of the Muizenberg Mountains behind, you really could not ask for a better view from this Stonehurst garden. Nothing but mountainside to your back, perching

on top of the stairs to enjoy both the garden and surrounding city feels surprisingly private and peaceful, despite the activity below. This tranquil setting is where landscaper Tracey Cole found herself in February this year, with a brief to create a low-maintenance, colourful garden that not only saluted the surrounding scenery, but also brought the surrounding nature into the garden itself.

Unfortunately, despite the gorgeous sights of this 'office' she found herself in, the challenges of the space proved to be anything but relaxing. 'The garden was a mess,' remarks Tracey. 'All areas of lawn were dead,

some indigenous plants were surviving but really neglected.' Large beds were filled with dying Dietes and Restios that appeared past their expiration date, and the only saveable patch featured a few drained Agapanthus plants. A combination of neglect and the previous years of drought left

the space in serious need of help. The first issue to grapple with was the

foundation of every good garden: the soil. The sloped area was filled with rock and clay, lacking both nutrition and moisture. The deep root systems of the previous plants, including tough Cynodon lawn, had to be pulled completely to improve the soil before planting once again. Working in the garden initially, Tracey also noticed a concerning lack of insects, an essential component to healthy soil. Choice of plants was tough, with high winds, intense heat and

← Left

Situated on a slope, the higher areas of the garden allow for captivating views to be enjoyed from all angles.

Right →

While the garden is packed with colour, two features in particular stand out – orange and purple. Repeated throughout the garden, this cohesiveness adds harmony amongst the varied plantings.

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↑ Above

With plenty of slopes to cover to hold soil, Tracey focused her attention on ground covers.

← Middle

Scabiosa africana is just one of the many stunning indigenous plants in this garden.

← Below

Watered by drip irrigation, this garden saves water and keeps the plants healthy at the same time.

lack of water to contend with. 'We used indigenous plants throughout the whole garden – back, middle and front. For the slopes in the back garden, we needed to hold soil, so we used trailing Vygies, Arctotis, Plectranthus and numerous trailing *Osteospermum*.' Biodiversity was also a consideration when gathering plants. 'We planted around 150 different varieties of plants, each species of plant serving a purpose, whether that be holding soil, becoming a feature, or adding colour to the garden throughout the seasons.' Most importantly, the sustainability of the space and surrounding environment was top of mind. 'Each and every plant attracts nature and will absolutely grow to handle the draining weather ailments of the mountain.' Given the region's history of drought and an unfortunately bleak picture painted for the future of water in the country and around the world, water-wise gardening practices are front and centre in this garden. Drip irrigation delivers water directly to the roots of the plants, limiting evaporation that can lead to tons of water wastage (in the case of sprinklers).





Water-wise plants that can withstand the heat of the area well were chosen, also adding to the low-maintenance nature of the space. The benefits of a borehole in the complex, combined with the installation of JoJo tanks to catch any excess water, mean very little is used and even less is wasted. Even with these challenges and the environment to consider, there was no compromise on the brief or the usability of the garden. The lawn area, although small enough to keep water usage low, has plenty of space to enjoy the sunshine or sit down for a picnic on the mountain. The indigenous plants add kaleidoscopic colour throughout the year, with patches of complementary orange and purple taking centre stage. And at the very top, you'll find two lounging chairs to take in the beautiful frame these plants provide for the vistas below.

Visiting the garden a few months after her work completed, Tracey notes that her greatest success, and what the owner of the garden appreciates most, is that the landscape has invited nature back into their backyard. Birds, bees and butterflies abound and add even more colour to the bright and cheerful scenery.

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↑ Above

Areas of lawn were retained for recreation and enjoyment without consuming masses of moisture.

← Middle

A central bed overflows with glorious colour.

← Below

The highlight of this brand-new landscaped garden is the wildlife it has welcomed to the space.